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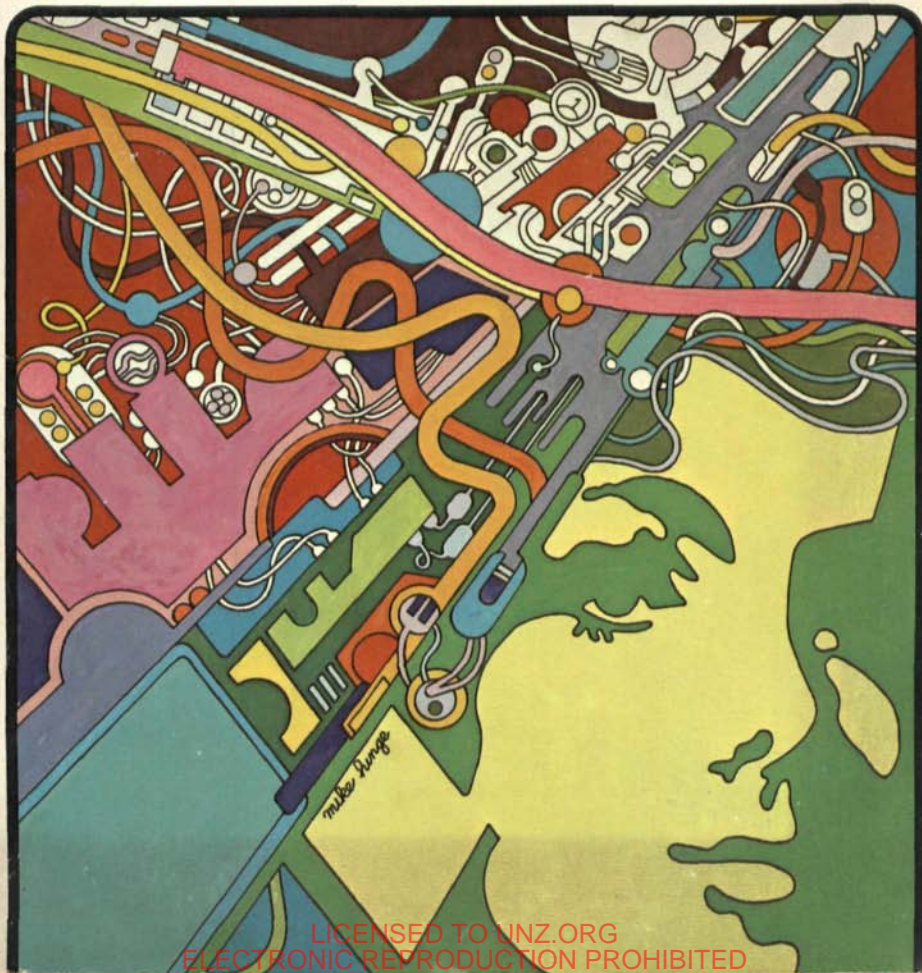
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# ALL STORIES NEW—NO REPRINTS

MAY, 1972

Vol. 46, No. 1

OTHER DAYS, OTHER EYES, a new SLOW GLASS novel by <b>BOB SHAW</b> .....	6
---	---

## new novelets

THE MAN WHO WALKED HOME by <b>JAMES TIPTREE, JR.</b> .....	46
SOFT CHANGE by <b>GORDON EKLUND</b> .....	58

## new short stories

IN DYING VENICE by <b>ROGER EBERT</b> .....	72
WATCHDØG by <b>JACK C. HALDEMAN</b> .....	78
LATEST FEATURE by <b>MAGGIE NADLER</b> .....	86
THERE'S NO ONE LEFT TO PAINT THE SKY by <b>GRANT CARRINGTON</b> .....	89

## new features

EDITORIAL by <b>TED WHITE</b> .....	4
THE SCIENCE IN SCIENCE FICTION (THE SCIENTIST IN SCIENCE FICTION) by <b>DAVID L. BOOK</b> .....	91
THE CLUB HOUSE by <b>JOHN D. BERRY</b> .....	98
THE FUTURE IN BOOKS by <b>TED WHITE</b> and <b>RICHARD LUPOFF</b> .....	108
OR SO YOU SAY .....	114

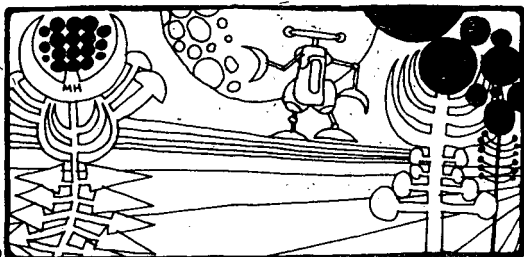
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## **EDITORIAL**



FOR THE MORE THAN twenty years I've been involved in science fiction, the most frequently-voiced hope among sf writers, editors and fans has been for "greater recognition" for science fiction. Periodically someone rises to the podium at a convention to decry the "ghetto" in which sf resides, the forsaken genre-pigeon-hole which ranks us, in the minds of The Powers That Be, alongside and a little below those of the mysteries and westerns.

These same people have not only lusted for "mainstream recognition" but have attempted in various ways to bring it about through sometimes elaborate public-relations campaigns aimed at the seduction of "mainstream" reviewers and critics. I can't fault their desire, because it is a natural one for us all: we all want our chief endeavors legitimized by the blessings of the Taste Makers. Imagine how satisfied Ian Fleming must have felt when John F. Kennedy allowed it to be known that he enjoyed reading the James Bond thrillers, for instance. And, before Kennedy, Eisenhower was known to be fond of westerns, and Roosevelt gave his cachet to detective stories. But no president has ever confessed a fondness for science fiction.

"Greater recognition" or acceptance for science fiction strikes the sf writer in exactly the two most vulnerable spots he possesses: his pocket book and his ego. The usual presumption is that wider public acceptance of sf would lead di-

rectly to greater sales, while reviews in the *New York Review of Books* or the *New York Times* Book Review would definitely stoke the fires of any sf writer's vanity.

But it would appear that it has its drawbacks as well. Until recently we've been invisible—neither raved about nor condemned—but now that we have begun to be noticed in the Higher Places, we've become exposed to a new type of exploitation—a form of "recognition" which does us more harm than good.

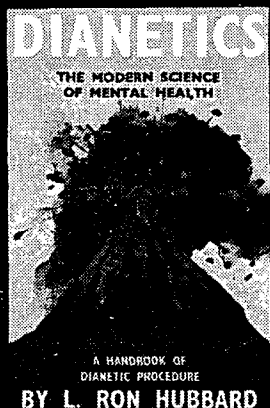
Roughly a year ago, *Time* magazine did a brief, cursory but complimentary survey of the sf field (curiously enough, the only magazine mentioned in the text was *Galaxy*, but among the cuts of book covers was the cover of an old pulp issue of *AMAZING STORIES* . . .), focussing primarily upon the sales successes of such novels as *Stranger in a Strange Land* and *Dune*. After an appropriate wait (so as not to appear to be copying its arch-rival), *Newsweek* published its own brief rundown, ostensibly a review of three sf novels, by Peter S. Prescott in its November 29, 1971 issue. I commend it to you for its remarkable example of critical bigotry.

Up to now we haven't had to cope with such nonsense, but I suspect this review is an accurate foretaste of what we can expect in the years to come, as more and more of the major-media publications decide science fiction is worthy of their

(Continued on page 124)

**EDITORIAL**

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# OTHER DAYS, OTHER EYES

## BOB SHAW

*When Bob Shaw returned to sf writing in the mid-sixties after an absence of half a decade, it was with a bang—the publication, in Analog, of “Light of Other Days,” and the introduction of a brand new concept in sf, “slow glass.” The story subsequently placed a very close second in Hugo and Nebula Award balloting, and appeared in two ‘best of the year’ anthologies as well as Analog’s own annual anthology. It is now being used in college textbooks and has already become a classic in the field. At John Campbell’s urging, Shaw wrote a second “slow glass” story, “Burden of Proof,” and then pushed the idea onto his back burner to simmer while he went on to write six novels and assorted short stories. Recently he wrote a third short story, “A Dome of Many-Colored Glass,” which appeared in last month’s FANTASTIC. Together with the previous two stories, that story will be published as an interlude in the book form of the novel which follows—in which we witness the discovery of “slow glass” and the ever-widening ripples of change which it introduces into world society . . .*

### (First of Two Parts)

#### CHAPTER I

AT FIRST the other car was just a blood-red speck in the dwindling perspectives of the highway, but even at that distance—and in spite of the glare caused by the keyhole-shaped iris of his left eye—Garrod was able to identify the year and the model. It was a 1982 Stiletto. Prompted by an illogical apprehension, he eased his foot off the throttle and his own car began slowing from its 90mph cruise. Even with the smoothness of his movement the turbine gave a moan of mechanical disappointment on the over-run.

“What’s the matter?” His wife was predictably and instantly alert.

“Nothing.”

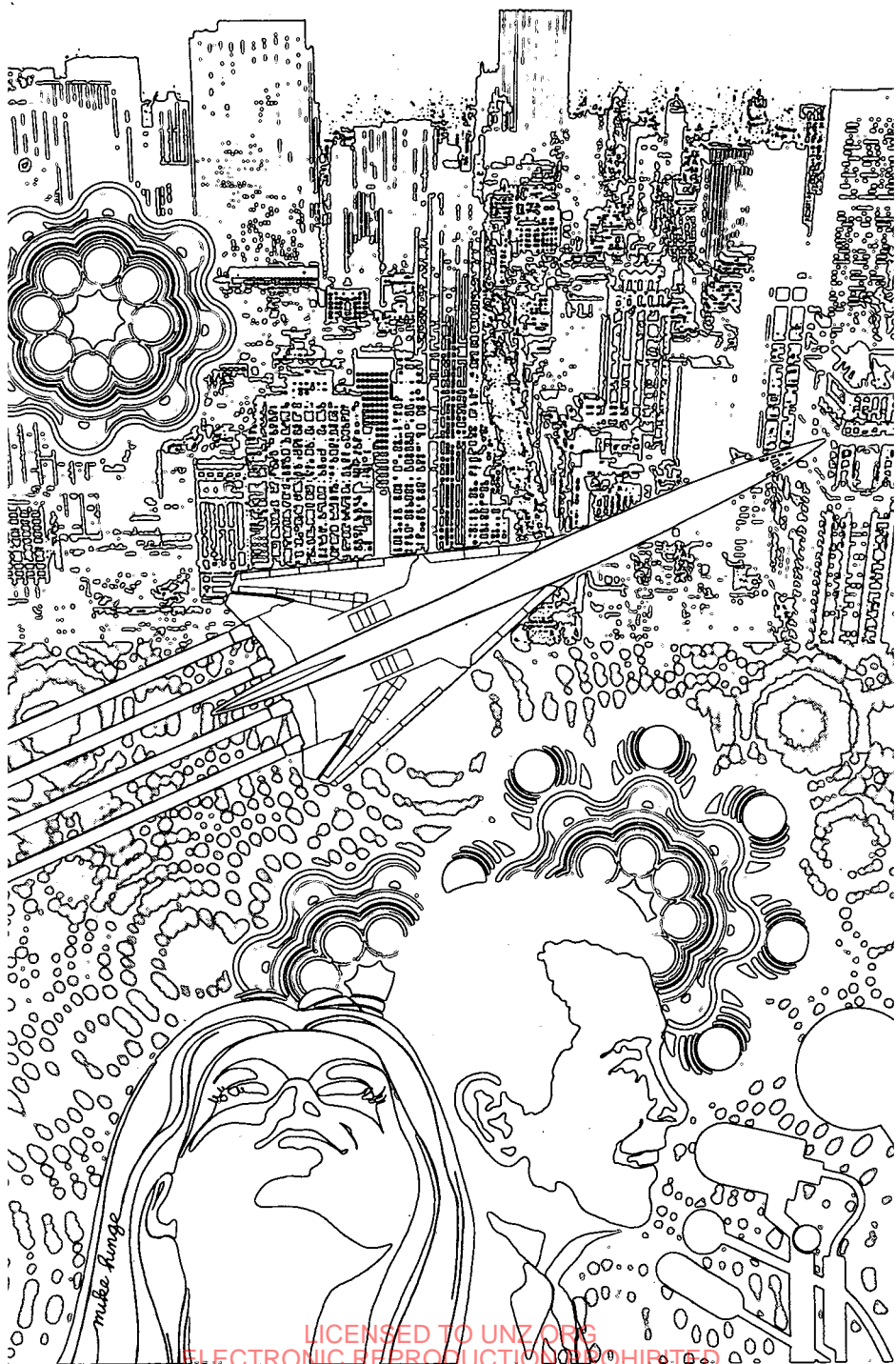
“But why did you slow down?” Esther liked to keep a close watch on

all her property, in which category she included her husband, and her stiffly-lacquered broad-brimmed hat made scanning movements like those of a radar dish.

“No particular reason.” Garrod smiled his protest at being questioned, and watched as the Stiletto ballooned larger in the windshield. Suddenly—as he had known it would—the Stiletto’s left-hand turn signal began to flash orange light. Garrod checked and saw the side-road which branched off the highway at a point midway between the two cars. He hit the brake and his Turbo-Lincoln dipped its nose as the tires gripped the road. The red Stiletto swerved across their path and vanished up the side-road in a cloud of saffron dust. Garrod had a fleeting impression of a boy’s face at the sport car’s side

**Illustrated by MICHAEL HINGE**

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window, the mouth a dark circle, shocked, accusatory.

"My God, did you see that?" Esther's neat features were momentarily haggard. "Did you see that?"

Because his wife was acting as spokesman for their anger, Garrod was able to remain calm. "You bet I saw it."

"If you hadn't slowed down when you did, that stupid kid would have been right into us . . ." Esther paused and turned sideways to look at him as the thought struck her. "Why *did* you slow down, Alban? It was almost as if you knew what was going to happen."

"I've learned not to trust kids in red sport cars, that's all." Garrod laughed easily, but his wife's question had disturbed him more than it would had no spoken comment been made. What had prompted him to throttle back just when he did? On one level, he was entitled to have a special interest in the current-model Stiletto car—it was the first production line vehicle to be fitted with a Thermgard windshield made in his own factory; but that did not explain the icy heavings in his subconscious, the sense of having looked at something ghastly and of having erased the memory.

"I knew we should have gone on the official plane," Esther said.

"You also wanted to make a little vacation out of the trip."

"I know, but I didn't expect . . ."

"There's the airfield now," Garrod interrupted, as a high wire fence appeared on their left. "We've made good time." Esther nodded reluctantly and settled back to stare at the runway

markers and landing aids which had become visible beyond the wavering blur of fence poles. This was their second wedding anniversary and Garrod had a niggling suspicion she resented such a large portion of the day being taken up by a business appointment. There was nothing he could do about that, however—even if her family's money had saved the Garrod organization from collapse. The United States had been disastrously late in entering the civil supersonic transport field, but the Mach 4 Aurora would go into service before very long—just at a time when the SSTs of other countries were beginning to show their age—and he, Alban Garrod, had made a contribution. He could not say exactly why it was so important for him to be present at the Aurora's first public flight, but he knew nothing would stop him seeing the titanium eagle take to the air and find its way aloft with the eyes he had given it.

In five minutes they were at the main gate of the United Aircraft Constructors' field. A guard in crisp, oatmeal-colored linens saluted and waved them through when he saw Garrod's contractor's invitation card. They drove slowly through the crowded administration complex. Brightly-painted direction signs glowed in the morning sunlight, creating a fairground atmosphere. Everywhere Garrod looked he saw leggy golden girls in the uniforms of the airlines which had placed advance orders for the Aurora.

Esther placed a possessive hand on his thigh. "Lovely, aren't they? I'm beginning to see why you were so determined to be here."



"I wouldn't have come without you," Garrod lied. He squeezed Esther's knee to reinforce his words, and felt the sudden rigidity of her muscles.

"Look, Alban, *look!*" Her voice was pitched high. "That must be the Aurora. Why didn't you tell me it was so *beautiful?*"

Garrod felt a pang of vicarious pride as he glimpsed the vast silvery shape, sentient, futuristic yet prehistoric, a mathematical organism. He had not expected Esther to appreciate the Aurora and his eyes prickled with gratification. Abruptly, he was completely happy—the incident with the red Stiletto had been too trivial for words. Another guard waved them into the small parking lot which had been created for the benefit of contractors by stringing varicolored ropes on portable standards at the edge of the field. Garrod got out of the car and breathed deeply, trying to fill his lungs with the pastels of morning. The air was warm, evocatively laced with kerosene fumes.

Esther was still staring raptly at the Aurora, which loomed beyond the roof of a red-and-white marquee. "The windows seem so small."

"Only because of the scale. That's a big airplane; you know. We're more than four hundred yards from it."

"I still think it looks a little . . . short-sighted. It's like a bird with its eyes all squeezed, trying to see."

Garrod took her elbow and guided her towards the marquee. "The point is that it *has* eyes, just like an ordinary aircraft. That's why our Thermgard was so important to the project—it let the designers cut out all the weight and complexity of the heatshields used on

the sort of SSTs that are flying around now."

"I was only teasing you, Mr. Garrod, sir." Esther playfully hugged his left arm with both of hers as they entered the comparative shadiness of the marquee, and her small, precision-cast features developed new facets as she smiled. With one part of his mind Garrod noted that, once again, his rich wife had contrived to have a firm and obvious grip on her property as they joined a gathering of strangers, but he was in no mood to object. A sense of excitement was building up within him as a tall man with gold-and-silver hair and a tanned boyish face came shouldering through the crowd. It was Vernon Maguire, president of United Aircraft Constructors.

"Glad you could make it, Al." Maguire eyed Esther appreciatively. "And this is Boyd Livingstone's little girl, is it? How is your father these days, Esther?"

"Busier than ever—you know what he's like about work." Esther shook hands with Maguire.

"I hear he's thinking about going into politics. Is he still so touchy about gambling?"

"He wants to blow up every racetrack in the country." Esther smiled at Maguire, and Garrod was surprised to feel a faint twinge of annoyance. Esther knew nothing about the aviation industry, was present only on a courtesy basis, yet Maguire's attention was fully on her. Money was talking to money.

"Give him my regards, Esther." A look of theatrical concern passed over Maguire's young, not-young face. "Say,

why didn't you bring the old boy along with you?"

"We just didn't think of asking him," she said. "But I'm sure he would have enjoyed the first flight of . . ."

"This isn't the first flight," Garrod put in with more severity than he had intended. "It's the first public demonstration."

"Don't be too hard on the little lady, Al," Maguire laughed, pushing his fist against Garrod's shoulder. "Besides, as far as your windshields are concerned this is the first flight."

"Oh? I thought the Thermgard went in last week."

"It was supposed to, Al, but we've been pushing ahead so fast with the low-speed trials we couldn't take time out from the program to change the shields."

"I didn't know that," Garrod said. Inexplicably, he recalled the red Stiletto and the startled, accusing face of its driver. "So this is the first flight with my windshields?"

"That's what I just said. They went in last night, and if there aren't any hitches the Aurora goes supersonic on Friday. Why don't you two order yourselves a drink and find a seat out front? I have to keep moving." Maguire smiled briefly and edged away.

Garrod stopped a hostess and ordered an orange juice for Esther and a vodka tonic for himself. They took the drinks out to where seats had been placed in rows facing the airfield. The sudden increase in light intensity ran a needle of pain into Garrod's left eye, ultra-sensitive to glare as the result of a partial iridectomy carried out when he was a child. He put on polarised

glasses to make viewing easier. Groups of men and women were sitting watching the activity around the enormous brooding shape of the Aurora. Trailers containing the ground services were clustered beneath the aircraft and technicians in white overalls moved on the steps which led into its belly.

Garrod sipped his drink, found it cold and clean-tasting, with a little extra bite which suggested a high proportion of spirits. It was rather early in the day for serious drinking, especially as he always found that a morning drink had the same effect as three in the evening, but he decided the occasion warranted a little bending of the rules. During the half-hour which elapsed before the Aurora was ready to take off he quickly but unobtrusively downed three vodka tonics, thereby gaining entrance to a glittery, relaxed, optimistic world where beautiful people sipped sunfire from hollowed diamonds. Representatives of top management with other contracting companies came and went in jovial succession and Wayne Renfrew, the chief test pilot for UAC, made a brief appearance, smiling with practised ruefulness as he refused a drink.

Renfrew was a small man, homely, with a reddish nose and thinning crew-cut hair, but he had an abstracted air of self-possession which reminded people he had been chosen to teach a two-billion dollar piece of experimental hardware how to fly like an airplane. Garrod felt curiously uplifted when the pilot singled him out to make a comment on just how much the Thermgard transparencies meant to the Aurora project. He watched gratefully

as Renfrew, walking with the straight back of a short man, made his way out to a white jeep and was driven the few hundred yards to the aircraft.

"Remember me?" Esther said jealously. "I can't fly an airplane, but I'm a good cook."

Garrod turned to look at his wife, wondering if her words had conveyed her exact meaning. Her brown eyes locked with his, positive as the bolt of a rifle, and he understood that on the morning of their second wedding anniversary, at an important business-cum-social function, merely because his attention had strayed from her for a few minutes she was hinting that he had homosexual tendencies. He entered the fact in a mental dossier, then gave her his very best smile.

"Sweetheart," he said warmly, "let me get you another drink."

She smiled back immediately, mollified. "I think I'll have a Martini this time."

He brought it from the bar personally and was setting it on their table when the Aurora's engines gave a deep whine which within a few seconds was lost in a ground-disturbing rumble as ignition was fully established. The sound continued at the same level for several interminable minutes, was stepped up as the aircraft began to roll, becoming almost unbearable when the Aurora turned towards the main runway and its jet pipes momentarily pointed at the marquee. Garrod felt his chest cavity begin to resonate. He experienced something close to animal panic—then the aircraft had moved on and there came comparative quietness.

Esther took her hands away from her ears. "Isn't it *exciting*?"

Garrod nodded keeping his eyes on the Aurora. The lustrous titanium shape crept away into the distance—ungainly on its elongated undercarriage, like a wounded moth—and flashed sunlight as it turned its prow into the wind. With surprisingly little delay it rolled along the runway, gathered speed and reared into the air. Dust storms raced along the ground behind the Aurora as it cleaned itself for true flight, drawing in its appendages and flaps, and banked away to the south.

"It's beautiful, Al." Esther caught his arm. "I'm glad you brought me."

Garrod's throat closed with pride. Behind him a loudspeaker made a coughing sound and a male voice began to intone a non-technical description of the Aurora. It spoke impassively while the aircraft itself faded out of sight in the pulsing blueness, and concluded by saying that, while the Aurora was not yet cleared to carry passengers, UAC would try to give its guests an impression of what the aircraft was like to fly by hooking up the public address system to the communications link.

"Hello, ladies and gentlemen." Renfrew's voice came in on cue. "The Aurora is approximately ten miles south of your position, and we are flying at a height of four thousand feet. I am putting the aircraft into a left-hand turn and will be over the airfield again in slightly less than three minutes. The Aurora handles like a dream and . . ." Renfrew's professionally sleepy voice faded out for a moment, then returned with a note of puzzlement.

"She seems just a little slow in responding to control demands this morning, but that's probably due to the combination of low speed and hot, thin air. As I was saying . . ."

Vernon Maguire's aggrieved voice suddenly filled the marquee. "That's a test pilot for you. We put him on the air to do a sales pitch for the Aurora and all he does is try to find fault with the Goddam flying controls." He burst out laughing and most of the men near him joined in. Garrod stared into the southern sky until he saw the Aurora shining like a star, a planet, a small moon which resolved itself into a silver dart. It passed slightly to the east of the airfield at about a thousand feet, flying at low speed, with its nose held high.

"I am about to make another left-hand turn and then will do a low-speed pass along the main runway to demonstrate the Aurora's excellent handling qualities in this section of the flight envelope." Renfrew's voice now sounded perfectly normal and unstressed, and Garrod's sense of unease faded. He looked down at Esther and saw she had taken out a compact and was powdering her nose.

She noticed his glance and made a face at him. "A girl's got to . . ."

Renfrew's voice came from the loudspeaker, all sleepiness gone. "There's that sluggishness again. I don't like it, Joe. I'm coming in on . . ." There was a loud click as the hook-up to the public address system was broken. Garrod shut his eyes and saw the red Stiletto sport car speeding closer and closer.

"Don't run away with the idea that

this is any kind of emergency," Maguire said reassuringly. "Wayne Renfrew is the best test pilot in the country, and he got there by being cautious and safe. If you want to see a perfect landing—just watch this."

The crowd in the marquee fell silent as the Aurora sliced quietly across the sky at the northern end of the airfield, shape changing as the undercarriage was lowered and the flaps spread. It aligned itself with the runway and came in, sinking fast, nose held high and landing gear reaching tentatively for the ground in the characteristic manner of all high-speed aircraft in the last moments of flight. The descent continued into the shimmering whiteness of the runway, and Garrod discovered he could not breathe.

"Flare out," a man whispered close by. "For Christ's sake, Wayne, flare out!"

The Aurora continued to sink at the same rate, struck the runway and made an awkward slewing leap back into the sky. It seemed to hang in the air for a second, then one wing dipped. The undercarriage on that side crumpled as it met the concrete again, then the aircraft was down, wallowing, sliding, twisting. Multiple reports of explosive bolts rang out above the screeching of metal as the Aurora shed its wings with their deadly load of fuel, allowing the fuselage to slither and skid ahead like a javelin thrown on a frozen lake. Both wings, fluttering their separate ways, bucked into the air and one of them exploded in a fountain of fire and black smoke. The fuselage slid on for a further half-mile, squandering its kinetic energy in showers of glowing metal

before coming reluctantly to rest.

There was a moment of silence.

Utter calm.

Far across the airfield sirens were beginning to sound as Garrod lowered himself into his seat. The face of the boy in the red Stiletto wavered in his vision—shocked, accusing.

Garrod pulled his wife down onto the seat beside him. "I did that," he said in a level, conversational voice. "I destroyed that aircraft."

## CHAPTER 2

THE LEYGRAF COMPUTER BUREAU occupied a smallish suite of offices in one of the older business blocks in downtown Portston. Garrod entered the compact reception area, approached the gray-faced efficient-looking woman who presided at the desk and gave her his card.

"I would like to see Mr. Leygraf for a few minutes."

The receptionist smiled apologetically. "I'm sorry—Mr. Leygraf is in conference, and if you have no appointment . . ."

Garrod smiled in return, then glanced at his watch. "It is now precisely one minute past four o'clock. Correct?"

"Mmm . . . yes."

"Which means that Carl Leygraf is sitting alone in his office sipping his first drink of the day. The drink is a tall, weak Scotch-and-soda with plenty of ice, and I want something in that line myself. Please let him know I'm here."

The woman hesitated before speaking into an intercom set. A few seconds

later Leygraf emerged from the inner office with a dewy glass in his hand. He was a slim, carelessly dressed man, prematurely bald and with concerned gray eyes.

"Come in, Al," he said. "You're just in time for a drink."

"I know." Garrod went into his office, a silvery room in which complex mathematical models of wire and string took the place of ornaments. "I could use a drink. My car flamed out on me two blocks from here and I had to abandon it and walk. Do you know anything about turbine engines?"

"No, but tell me the symptoms and I might be able to work something out."

Garrod shook his head. One of the things he liked about Leygraf was the way in which the man was quite prepared to take interest in any subject under the sun and have a conversation about it. "That's not what I came to see you about."

"Oh? Vodka tonic you go for, isn't it?"

"Thanks. Not too strong."

Leygraf mixed the drink and brought it to the desk where Garrod was sitting. "Are you still worried about those Stiletto cars?"

Garrod nodded but took a long swallow from his glass before speaking. "I've got some new data for you."

"Such as?"

"I suppose you heard about the Aurora crash two days ago?"

"*Heard* about it! I've heard nothing else, friend. My wife bought some UAC new issue last year on my advice, and she's been . . ." Leygraf paused with



his glass at his lips. "What do you mean by new data?"

"The Aurora had Thermgard windshields."

"I knew you had that contract, Al, but surely that aircraft's been flying around for months."

"Not with my shields in. United were anxious to get ahead with the low-speed part of the flight test program, so they flew it for a while with conventional transparencies." Garrod stared into his glass and saw the minute currents of cold liquid shimmering down from the ice cubes. "Tuesday's flight was the first with my Thermgard installed."

"Coincidence!" Leygraf snorted emphatically. "What are you trying to do to yourself?"

"You came to me, Carl. Remember?"

"Yeah, I know—but I also told you it was a freak run of the figures. When you're analysing anything as complex as urban travel demands you're bound to turn up all kinds of statistical sports . . ."

"On the way to McPherson Field Esther and I almost got hit by a Stiletto which was making a left turn."

"You're spoiling my best drink of the day," Leygraf said aggrievedly, pushing his glass away. "Step outside the problem for a minute—how could a new type of windshield glass cause accidents? For God's sake, Al, how could it possibly happen?"

Garrod shrugged and fixed his mind on one of the mathematical models for a moment, trying to identify the equation it represented. "I grew a new kind of crystal. Tougher than any known

glass. It shouldn't even be transparent, because it reflects energy at practically every wave-length in the spectrum. Only the visible wavelengths get through. No heat. So I patented myself the best windshield material in the world." Garrod spoke abstractedly, his soul sliding on the curves and generators of the model.

"But supposing some other kind of radiation gets through, perhaps even gets amplified or focussed? Something we don't know about."

"Something that turns good drivers and pilots into bad ones?" Leygraf, apparently forgetting he had renounced his drink, seized the glass and drained it. "Do they also sprout hairs all over their faces and grow teeth like this?" He pushed his knuckles into his mouth and wriggled downward-projecting fingers.

Garrod laughed gratefully. "Don't remind me how crazy it sounds. All I'm trying to do is think in other categories. I seem to have read something about a road in France which was an accident blackspot, and nobody knew why because it was one of those straight and wide affairs lined with poplars. Turned out the poplars were spaced in such a way that if you drove along that road at the speed limit the sunlight coming through the trees flickered at ten cycles a second.

"What's that supposed to . . . ?" Leygraf looked blank. "Oh, I get it—the brain's alpha rhythm. Hypnosis."

"Yeah. And there's epilepsy. Did you know that it isn't safe for an epileptic to try adjusting a television set which has slow rolling flickers?"

Leygraf shook his head. "Different type of phenomena, Al."

"Maybe it isn't. What if Thermgard oscillates? Produces a pulse effect?"

"It wouldn't explain the significance of the turns. My company's survey showed that practically all the Stiletto accidents occurred during left-hand turns. If you ask me the steering geometry on that automobile is suspect."

"It isn't," Garrod said firmly. "I've seen the advance reports."

"Of course, the Aurora was turning when it crashed." Leygraf's gray eyes had widened slightly. "You could say an aircraft turns in the vertical plane when it lands, couldn't you?"

"Yes, it's called the flare-out—except that in this case Renfrew didn't flare out soon enough. He almost flew the Aurora straight into the ground."

Leygraf jumped to his feet. "He turned too late! And that's what the Stiletto drivers tend to do. They underestimate the time they need to cross the opposing line of traffic. That's it, Al."

Garrod's heart began to fill his chest like a pillow. "That's what?"

"Your common factor, of course."

"But where does it get us?"

"Nowhere—it validates your new data, that's all. But I'm beginning to swing in favour of your idea that Thermgard affects the light which passes through it—supposing it alters the wavelength of ordinary light and makes it harmful? A sick driver or pilot would probably . . ."

Garrod was shaking his head. "In that case colors wouldn't be true when seen through the material. Windshields

have to meet all kinds of standards, you know."

"Well *something* has to slow the drivers' reactions," Leygraf said. "Look, Al, you're dealing with two factors here. There's light itself—which is an invariant—and there's the human . . ."

"Don't say any more. Don't speak!" Garrod gripped the arms of his chair as the floor seemed to tilt ponderously beneath him. He felt a cool prickling sensation on his forehead and cheeks, and when he tried to voice the thought which had just occurred to him the gulf between logic and language proved too great to bridge.

TWO HOURS LATER, after a punishing drive through the rush hour traffic, the two men reached the cream-colored building which was the research and administration center of Garrod Transparencies Inc. It was a fine October evening, and the air was soft and thick, nostalgic. From the parking lot they could see a distant tennis court, gem-like in the setting of trees, where white figures played perhaps the final game of the season.

"That's what I should be doing," Leygraf said bitterly as they walked to the main entrance. "Do you have to be so secretive about why you dragged me out here?"

"I'm not being secretive." Garrod could feel himself moving carefully, like a man who was unsure of his footing. "It's just that I don't want to influence your thinking in any way. I'm going to show you something, and you have to tell me what it means."

They entered the building and took the elevator to Garrod's second-floor office suite. The building had seemed deserted, but a stocky man who wore screwdrivers like fountain pens in his breast pocket met them in the corridor.

"Hi, Vince," Garrod said. "You got my message?"

Vince nodded. "I got it, but I don't understand it. Did you really want a breadboard rig with two room lamps on it? And a rotary switch?"

"That's what I wanted." Garrod slapped Vince on the shoulder, a gesture of apology for not explaining the mystery, and went into his office. It was a combination of executive suite and design facility, with a drafting table sharing pride of place with a large untidy desk.

Leygraf pointed at the blackboard which ran the length of the wall. "Do you really use that thing? I thought they only had those in the movies. Old William Holden movies."

"It helps me to think. When there's a problem on that board I can see it and work on it no matter what's going on in here." Garrod spoke slowly as he examined the piece of makeshift equipment on his desk. It consisted of a chipboard base carrying two lamps and a variable-speed rotary switch, all connected by plastic-covered wire and linked to a power point. *Some day*, he thought, with a curious lack of emotion, *the world's science museums will be bidding against each other for this assembly of junk.* He plugged the cord into a wall socket, operated the rotary switch and both lamps began to flash in unison. Moving the switch control

slightly, he adjusted the cycle so that the lamps were lit for roughly a second, out for roughly a second.

"Just like Times Square." Leygraf sniffed loudly to draw attention to his sarcasm.

Garrod caught his arm and drew him closer to the desk. "Do you see the kind of circuit we have here? Two lamps and a switch wired in series."

"It wasn't covered in my computer course at Cal Tech, but I think I get the general drift. I think my mind is expanding to grasp the advanced technology involved."

"I just wanted to be certain you appreciate . . ."

"For God's sake, Al!" Leygraf's patience began to desert him. "What is there to appreciate?"

"Just this." Garrod opened a cupboard and removed what appeared to be an ordinary, if rather thick, piece of glass. "Thermgard."

He carried it to the desk where the two lamps were blinking in unison, and stood it vertically in front of the breadboard rig, positioning it so that only one of the lamps was visible through the glass.

"What way are the lamps behaving now?" Garrod did not look at them himself.

"How *can* they behave, Al? You haven't done anything to . . . Oh, Jesus!"

"Precisely." Garrod leaned sideways and looked at the two lights from approximately the same angle as Leygraf. The lamp behind the glass was still emitting its one-second flashes, but now it was out of step with the other. He removed the glass and both lamps were

in unison again. He replaced the glass and they were out of phase.

"I wouldn't have believed it," Leygraf said.

Garrod nodded. "Remember, I said Thermgard had no right to be transparent? It appears that even light has difficulty in passing through it—so much difficulty that the journey of half-an-inch through this piece of material takes it about one second. That's why drivers of Stiletos have been involved in too many accidents, and that's why the pilot of the Aurora almost flew it into the ground—they were out of step with their surroundings, Carl.

*"They were seeing the world as it had existed one second in the past!"*

"IS THIS WHAT you've been working on all these weeks?" Esther Garrod stared dubiously at the crystal rectangle which covered her husband's right hand. "It looks like an ordinary piece of glass."

"But it isn't." Garrod took a childish delight in prolonging the moment. "This is . . . *slow glass*." He tried to identify the expression on her neat, diamond-cut features, refusing to accept that it might be hostility.

"Slow glass. I wish I could understand what has happened to you, Alban. On the phone you said you were bringing me a piece of glass which was two million miles thick."

"But this glass is two million miles thick—as far as a ray of light is concerned." Garrod became aware he was using the wrong approach, but could not decide how to change his course. "Or, to put it another way, this piece

of glass is almost eleven light-seconds thick."

Esther's lips moved silently and she turned away towards the window beyond which a single beech tree shone like a fire in the late sunlight.

"Look, Esther." Garrod spoke urgently. He held the crystal rectangle steady with his left hand and quickly took his right hand away from underneath it. Esther looked at his hand and screamed as she saw yet another right hand still framed in the glass.

"I'm sorry," Garrod said helplessly. "That was a stupid thing to do. I'd forgotten what it's like the first time."

Esther stared at the glass until the hand in it, moving with a life of its own, flicked to one side and ceased to exist. "What did you do?"

"Nothing, darling. I simply held my hand behind the glass until its image, the light being reflected from it, had passed through. This is a special kind of glass that light takes eleven seconds to pass through, so the image was still visible in it eleven seconds after my hand had been removed. There's nothing spooky about it."

Esther shook her head. "I don't like it."

Garrod felt the beginnings of a kind of desperation. "Esther, you're going to be the first woman in the history of the entire human race to see her own face as it really is. Look into the glass, please." He held the rectangular crystal before her.

"This is silly. I've looked in mirrors . . ."

"It isn't silly—go along with it and see. The reason I said no woman had ever really seen her own face is that

a mirror reverses left and right. If you had a mole on your left cheek, the woman you saw in the mirror would have a mole on her right cheek. But with slow glass . . .”

Garrod turned the glass, and Esther was looking into her own face. Her image persisted for eleven seconds, mouthing silently, until the light had made its way through the crystalline structure of the material—then it vanished. He waited for her to speak.

She smiled wanly. “Am I supposed to be impressed?”

“Frankly, yes.”

“I’m sorry, Alban.” She walked back to the window and stood gazing out at the descending vistas of lawns. Looking at the silhouette, Garrod noticed how her arms hung clear of her body, elbows slightly bent. He remembered from anthropology classes that this was normal differentiation from a male, whose arms would be expected to hang straight, but to his imagination it made Esther’s compact form seem assertive, tensed to exert her control. A cold white star of anger began to burn inside him.

“You’re sorry,” he snapped. “Well, I’m sorry too—sorry you haven’t the vision to realise what this material is going to mean to us and the rest of the world when it’s fully developed.”

She turned to face him. “I didn’t want to mention this tonight, when we’re both tired, but as you have raised the point . . .”

“Go on.”

“I was talking to Mawson in accounts last week and he told me you were scheduling research and development costs of over a million for your . . . slow

glass.” She gave him a sad smile. “You realise, of course, that it’s too preposterous for words.”

“I don’t see why.”

“I don’t see why,” she repeated scornfully. “Don’t you see that no parlour trick is worth that kind of money?”

“I really am sorry for you, Esther.”

“Don’t be.” Her voice grew rich and warm as she played the trump card which during their two years of marriage had often been selected but never laid on the table. “I’m afraid I just couldn’t allow you to be so careless with Dad’s money.”

Garrod took a deep breath. He had dreaded this moment for days, yet now that it was here he felt a curious elation in acting out the little tableau. “Have you been talking to Mawson within the last two days?”

“No.”

“I’ll reprimand him on your behalf—he doesn’t make the grade as a commercial spy.”

Esther glanced up at him, suddenly wary. “What are you talking about?”

“Mawson should have informed you that I leased out a couple of subsidiary patents on Thermgard this week. It was done in secret, of course, but he should have been on to it.”

“Is that all? Listen, Alban, the fact that you have finally managed to earn a few dollars off your own bat doesn’t . . .”

“Five million,” Garrod said pleasantly.

“What?” The color had left Esther’s face.

“Five million. I paid your father off this afternoon.” Garrod watched his wife’s jaw drop, and one part of his



mind noted that the look of open-mouthed, white-toothed astonishment made her look more beautiful than at any other time he could remember. "He looked almost as shocked as you do now."

"I'm not surprised at that." Esther, always good at in-fighting, altered her tack on the instant. "I don't understand how you managed to get five million out of a windshield material which is useless for windshields, but you did it by using Dad's money as a springboard—don't forget he let you have an unsecured loan at minimum interest. A gentleman would have offered him the chance . . ."

"To buy in solid? Sorry, Esther—Thermgard belongs to me. Alone."

"You'll get nowhere with it," she predicted. "You'll lose every cent."

"Think so?" Garrod walked to the window, held the rectangular crystal up to it, then strode quickly to the darkest corner of the room. When he turned to face her, Esther took a step backwards and shielded her eyes. In his hands, blinding in its red-gold magnificence, Garrod held the setting sun.

### CHAPTER 3

ON THE MORNING of his eleventh wedding anniversary Garrod had an important appointment scheduled at the Pentagon. He wanted to be at his fittest for it, and so decided to fly to Washington on the previous evening. Esther made some perfunctory objections about his appearing to snub people she had invited for dinner, but he was ready for her and dealt with them easily. His private transport took off

from Portston at 19:00 hours, went supersonic a few minutes later and levelled out a height of ten miles for the ninety minute flight east.

The missile-like climb to cruising altitude never failed to exhilarate Garrod—he had once calculated that if someone flying over the airfield at 50,000 feet dropped a rock, Garrod's own jet could take off at the same instant and be up with the intruder before the rock hit the ground. He undid the seat belt, looked out through the windows of certified zero-delay Thermgard at the sunlit cloud-kingdoms far below, and wondered what he should do about Esther.

Nine years had passed since he turned the tables on her with his abrupt metamorphosis from the unsuccessful engineer/chemist whose business would have failed without a transfusion of Livingstone money to the independent billionaire who could buy and sell her entire family. Those years had been immensely satisfying for Garrod on almost every level he could think of, yet—incredibly—he remembered the previous two years of marriage with a certain nostalgia.

The relationship with Esther had been seriously flawed by her need to treat him as property, but it had been a reality of existence. There had been a tight hard bond which, with its very construction, had in an odd way compensated for his own inability to experience real love or possessiveness of jealousy—the things Esther had demanded from him. Now, of course, she demanded nothing. It appeared that some deep sense of insecurity prevented her from entering a relationship

unless she had all the big battalions on her side, ready to deal with unforeseen developments. Since he had achieved financial independence his wife and he had been like components of a binary sun—linked together, influencing each other's movements, but never making contact. Garrod had considered a divorce, but neither the disadvantages of his present existence nor the appeal of another had been powerful enough to prompt him to act.

As usual, the effort of trying to think constructively about his emotional life or lack of it brought a weary impatience. He opened his brief case to do some preparatory work for the morning meeting and hesitated when he saw the confidential files, each carrying a red sticker which said:

"SECRET! THIS FILE MAY BE OPENED ONLY IN APPROVED ENVIRONMENTS, ZERO LIGHT CONDITIONS OR UNDER COVER OF A CERTIFIED SECURITY CLOAK TYPE U.S.183"

Garrod hesitated for a moment. His security cloak was neatly rolled up in its proper compartment of the case, but the thought of unfurling its beehive shape and putting on the supporting headband with its tiny light was suddenly irksome. He looked around the interior of the aircraft wondering if it would be safe to work in the open, then realised he was deceiving himself by even trying to detect a glass eye. Slow glass—now officially named Retardite—had replaced cameras for all spying activities. Its efficiency been known to operate successfully with little rods of it inserted into a man's pores like blackheads. On returning to his base an agent had only to squeeze out the

fleck of glass which under magnification would subsequently re-display everything it had "seen" during its delay period. Anybody, even Garrod's personal pilot, could have pushed a needle of slow glass into the fabric trimming the ceiling of the cabin and he would have no hope of finding it. Closing the briefcase, he decided to get some rest.

"I'm going to have a sleep, Lou," he said into the intercom. "Call me fifteen minutes before touchdown. All right?"

"Right, Mr. Garrod."

Garrod fully reclined his seat and closed his eyes, not really expecting to sleep, but the next thing of which he was aware was the pilot's announcement that they were arriving. He went into the washroom and freshened up quickly. In the mirror his square, almost fleshless face had a rueful look, acknowledging that his compulsion to wash his hands and face before meeting people was a legacy from a childhood spent with—to put it kindly—a highly individual aunt and uncle. Uncle Luke's incredible fear of spending even the smallest sums of money had left certain marks on Garrod, but Aunt Marge had been the one who created the most lasting impression. She had been a school teacher and her phobias about dirt and germs were so morbid that when she dropped a pencil she never touched it again—one of the pupils had to pick it up, snap it in two and throw the pieces into a wastebin. Also, she never touched a door knob with her bare hands, and when the handle was of a type which could not be worked by her elbow she would wait for quite long

periods for someone to arrive by chance and open it. From her Garrod had acquired a certain fastidiousness, and even in adult life still felt compelled to wash his hands *before* urinating to prevent the transference of germs onto his person.

He was strapped into his seat again before the little jet dropped solidly onto the runway at Washington. The night felt cool and fresh as he was walking down the airstair. He had an unusual urge to go for a plain old-fashioned walk, but a limousine was waiting at the steps as arranged by his secretarial staff and he decided against upsetting the schedule. In a further thirty minutes he was at his hotel and had checked into his suite. He had planned to go to bed early but the rest on the airplane, coupled with the fact that he had gained time on the supersonic east-bound flight, made the idea of retiring seem faintly ludicrous.

Irritated at his inability to relax, he opened his briefcase, took out the security cloak and put it on. Sitting on a chair at the center of the black beehive he began to go over his files by the glow of the lamp attached to his forehead. The paper work was perversely unmanageable in the cramped confines—some of it being minutes of a previous meeting taken down in SpeedBraille but which he had omitted to have transcribed into normal text. The subject was the provision of a series of Retardite disks of varying delay periods for a proposed system of strategic survey satellites, and there was much technical argument about delay increments and the eventual desirability of building numerous short-

term disks into a long-delay composite which might be recalled to Earth for splitting at any desired point.

Garrod sat for perhaps an hour, running his fingers over the embossed SpeedBraille characters, hoping his meeting in the morning would be in one of the Pentagon's up-to-date "approved environment" rooms. The last two had been in the older zero-light rooms and had seemed like black eternities of unseen voices, rustling papers and the urgent clicking of Braille shorthand machines. One of Garrod's private nightmares was that somebody would invent a sound recording device as efficient and ubiquitous as Retardite was for light, in which case confidential meetings might have to be held not only in darkness but in utter silence.

He had begun to consider putting his notes away again when the wall viewphone chimed. Glad to escape from underneath the cloak, he closed his case, went to the screen and pressed the answer button. The image of a black-haired girl appeared before him. She was gray-eyed, with a pale oval face and lips that were painted silver. Her face was one that Garrod might have seen in a dream, just once, a long time ago. He stared at her for a still moment trying to analyse the emotion he was experiencing, but could identify only one component—he felt *privileged* just to be looking at her. It came to him that a man could accept a woman as being beautiful, perhaps for years, a lifetime, because he had never met his personal ideal and therefore was adopting the standards of others. But if he ever did encounter his own ultimate, then everything had to

change and no other woman could any longer be considered as perfect. This girl had the wide-mouthed sensuality of a comic strip heroine, modified by a hint of Oriental subtlety and perhaps cruelty, and . . .

"Mr. Garrod?" Her voice was pleasant but unremarkable. "I'm sorry to disturb you at this late hour."

"You aren't disturbing me," Garrod said. *At least*, he thought, *not in the way you mean*.

"My name is Jane Wason. I work for the Department of Defense."

"I've never seen you there."

She smiled, showing very regular, very white teeth. "I work in the background, on the secretarial staff."

"Oh? Well, what brought you into the foreground?"

"I called your Portston office and they told me I'd find you at this number. Colonel Mannheim sends his apologies, but he will not be able to meet you in the morning."

"That's too bad." Garrod tried to sound disappointed. "Would you consider having dinner with me this evening?"

Apart from a slight widening of her eyes, the girl ignored his question. "The Colonel had to fly to New York this evening, but he'll be back in the morning. Could you postpone your meeting with him until 15.00 hours?"

"I could—but it means spending the morning alone in Washington. Will you have lunch with me?"

A tinge of color appeared in Jane Wason's cheeks. "At 15.00 hours, then."

"Wouldn't that be too late for lunch? That's when I'm meeting the Colonel."

"I was simply confirming your new appointment with Colonel Mannheim," she said firmly. A second later the screen went blank.

"You fouled that one up beautifully," Garrod said aloud, puzzled about what had happened to him. Even as a teenager he had known he was not the type to bring off an instant pick-up with success, yet the girl had upset his judgement. He had been convinced she would respond to him as he had to her, and now—he had to admit it—he was bitterly disappointed. Disappointed because a strange girl with silver lips had not looked at him and developed a "Some Enchanted Evening" syndrome. Across a crowded viewphone channel. Shaking his head in wonderment, he went into the bathroom to take a shower before dinner. He was unbuttoning his pants when his gaze fell on a notice beside the shower.

*"The management have taken every possible precaution to ensure that no objects made of Retardite, Spyglass, or any similar substance have been left in the rooms, but patrons who wish to have zero-light conditions will find green masterswitches in convenient locations."*

Garrod had heard about this trend developing in larger cities but this was the first occasion on which he had ever encountered evidence of a public reaction against slow glass. He shrugged, found a green pullswitch beside the shower and jerked the tasselled string. The room was plunged into a darkness which was complete except for a faint luminosity from the tassel. Taking a shower in these conditions, he decided, would be like drowning. Putting on the

light again, he finished undressing, stepped into the shower cubicle and at once noticed a small black shiny object lying in one corner. He picked it up and examined it closely. It looked like a bead or part of a button which had fallen from a woman's dress, but something prompted him to drop it carefully into the cubicle's outlet pipe.

#### CHAPTER 4

THE MEETING, much to Garrod's relief, was short and took place in one of the newer "approved environment" rooms which the Pentagon regarded as having been sufficiently proofed against glass eyes as to be suitable for important conferences. In practice, this meant that the walls, floor and ceiling had been sprayed with quick-setting plastic under official supervision minutes before the meeting. The treatment was also applied to the table and chairs, giving them an appearance reminiscent of nursery furniture. A thick, buttery smell of fresh plastic had pervaded the entire meeting. When it was over Garrod lingered at the door and intercepted Colonel Mannheim as casually as possible, but with an unwarranted pounding in his chest.

"Nice idea there," he said, glancing around the gleaming walls, "but there's one drawback, John. The room's bound to be getting smaller and smaller. Someday it'll disappear altogether."

"So what's wrong with that?" Mannheim, a well-preserved man in his fifties had clear eyes and a ruddy skin which suggested he liked open-air activities. "Aren't there too many rooms in this damned place?"

"That's the impression I get. Give me a small efficient set-up every . . ." Garrod put on what he hoped was a convincing look of astonishment. "Say! Do you know something? I've never visited your Retardite Applications Group in . . . in . . ."

"Macon, Georgia."

"That's it."

Mannheim looked doubtful. "I've just come from there, Al, and I'm not scheduled to go back for a week or more."

"Too bad—I've got the rest of the day free, but I have to be back in Portston in the morning."

"Of course . . ." Mannheim paused for what seemed an eternity to Garrod. "I don't actually have to *be* there with you, though there are one or two Retardite tricks I'd like to have shown you in person—after all, you invented the stuff."

"Discovered might be a better word," Garrod said. "As you say, you don't have to take time off to go with me. Why not just hand me over to a science officer? I really would like to look around your organization there." Garrod wondered if he was sounding too anxious.

"I tell you what! I'll let young Chris Zitron look after you. He's the chief development officer and he'll get a real kick out of meeting you. Let's go to a viewphone."

While Mannheim was making the call to Macon research center Garrod stood directly behind him and kept an eye on the screen. Three female staff members appeared briefly as the visit was arranged, but none of them was Jane Wason. Garrod's disappointment



was mingled with a sense of shock as he realized what he was doing. His actions were remarkably similar to those of other men he had seen when they were completely bowled over by a woman, but he could feel nothing of the mystic elation which was supposed to accompany the experience. There was only a dogged, uncomfortable determination to see the girl in person.

When the arrangements were completed and Mannheim had hurried away, Garrod went into the viewer booth, contacted his pilot at Dulles and told him to file a new flight plan to Macon. He went up to the roof and caught a special DoD helijet flight to the airport, but the airspace above Dulles was more than usually congested and it was past four o'clock when his jet blasted its way up through the haze. There was no guarantee that he would be at the Macon base before the clerical staff quit for the day—in which case the whole trip was pointless.

Garrod lifted the intercom. "I'm in a hurry, Lou. Open her up. Top speed."

"We have to fly at 20,000 feet in this corridor, Mr. Garrod. The boom reflectors aren't too effective at that height, though."

"I don't care."

"The FAA will come down on us, and there's bound to be other flights in the same . . ."

"It's my responsibility, Lou. Start burning." Garrod sat back and allowed himself to be driven into the seat by acceleration as the compact jet went supersonic, riding rock-steady on the reflector wing which dispersed most of its shock wave upwards towards the

stratosphere. The 600-mile flight lasted thirty-two minutes from take-off to touch-down, and he was leaving the aircraft almost before it had stopped rolling.

"The FAA computer complex was interrogating us most of the way, Mr. Garrod." Lou Nash's red-bearded face registered his disapproval as he called after Garrod from the exit hatch. "They had to clear two scheduled freight flights out of our path."

"Relax, Lou, I'll fix it." One part of Garrod's mind told him he had committed a fairly serious traffic offence which might not be easy to square, even for a man in his position, but the rest of him was incapable of caring. *Is this what it's like?* he wondered feverishly as he walked towards the Army transport which was coming out to meet him from a cluster of low, sand-colored buildings. *If it is, I was better off before.*

Lt. Col. Chris Zitron turned out to be a youngish man with a thin face, an intense way of speaking and long, knobbly-fingered hands. Without any preamble he began talking about his work on slow glass applications, going into fine detail on dual image systems—one transmitted through ordinary glass, the other through short-term Retardite—used for target speed computers, air-to-ground missile guidance, and terrain clearance systems for high-speed low-altitude aircraft. Garrod allowed the torrent of words to flow around him while he occasionally asked a question to show that his attention was not wandering, but he kept scanning the glass-screened admin offices. Each time he glimpsed a black-

haired secretary he felt a surge of panic which turned to disappointment as the face proved to be the wrong one. He felt a dull sense of astonishment that a girl who had registered in his mind as unique could be resembled by so many other girls.

"I don't know how John Mannheim manages to keep track of all three different projects," he said during one of Zitron's infrequent silences. "Has he a permanent office right here in the research complex?"

"No. The colonel operates out of Admin One. Over there." Zitron pointed through a window towards a two-story block, the windows of which glowed like copper in the dying sunlight. Garrod examined the building and saw men and women emerging in a steady stream from the front entrance. Cars glinted brightly, like beetles' shells, as they began to move out of the parking lot.

"What's the quitting time around here? I hope I'm not-keeping you late."

Zitron laughed. "I usually work till my wife sends out search parties, but most sections go at five-fifteen."

Garrod looked at his watch. The time was 5.15. "You know, I'm becoming more and more interested in the impact that a good clean administrative set-up has on the ultimate efficiency of a research and development unit. Do you mind if we walk over to the offices?"

"Not at all." Zitron looked faintly puzzled as he led the way out of the laboratory they were in. Garrod fought to make himself walk at the same casual speed as he saw a black-haired girl in an oatmeal-colored suit come out

of the main building. Was it Jane Wason? In spite of himself, he began to forge ahead of the other man.

"Hold on there, Mr. Garrod," Zitron yelled suddenly. "What am I doing?"

"I'm sorry?"

"I almost let you walk off without seeing the purest application of the lot. Step through here a moment." Zitron held open a door leading into a long prefabricated building.

Garrod glanced towards the administration block. The girl was in the parking lot, only her dark head visible above the cars. "I'm running a bit short of . . ."

"You'll appreciate this, Mr. Garrod. We've gone right back to basic principles on this one." He caught Garrod's arm and walked him into the building which was little more than four walls with a roof made entirely of glass. In place of a floor it had a stretch of glass, with occasional shrubs and artificial-looking boulders towards the far end. The building was deserted but as he looked along it Garrod had an uneasy sense of something wrong, of being observed.

"Now watch this," Zitron said. "Keep watching me." He hurried away down one side of the building and at the other end disappeared into the shrubs. There was silence in the too-hot enclosure except for the distant sound of car doors slamming. A full minute dragged by with no further sign of Zitron and impatience began to pound in Garrod's temples. He half-turned towards the door but froze as the grass nearby—where there was no visible agency—emitted a rustling sound. Suddenly Zitron appeared out of thin air

a few paces away, with a triumphant grin.

"That was a demonstration of CAT—Covert Advance Technique," he said. "What did you think of it?"

"Excellent." Garrod opened the outer door. "Really effective."

"In this experimental set-up we use very short delay Retardite panels—you will see me sneaking up on you at any moment." Zitron pointed along the hall where occasional touches of reflected light now betrayed to Garrod's eyes the presence of slow glass panels standing upright in the grass. A duplicate of Zitron was seen making a supernaturally silent zig-zag approach before vanishing from the nearest panel.

"Of course," Zitron continued, "in the field we would use longer delay panels to give infantry slightly more time to set up the CAT screen. One of the things we're trying to determine is the maximum useful delay—make it too short and the men have no time to consolidate; make it too long and an observer has a better chance of detecting disparities in light strength and shadow angles. Another problem is the selection of the best curve geometry for the panels, to cut down reflection . . ."

"Pardon me a moment," Garrod said. "I think I see somebody I know."

He walked away towards the parking lot beside the administrative building, moving as quickly and determinedly as possible to discourage Zitron from following. The girl in the oatmeal suit was standing at the exit, looking in his direction. She was slim, black-haired and—as the distance between them narrowed—he saw the sheen of silver

on her lips. A tight breathless feeling developed in Garrod's chest as he accepted that he was looking at Jane Wason.

"Hi, there!" He tried to sound breezy and unconcerned. "Remember me?"

She looked at him doubtfully. "Mr. Garrod?"

"Yes. I'm here on a business trip and I thought I recognized you coming out of Colonel Mannheim's office. Look, I was being very presumptuous when we spoke on the viewphone last night, and I just wanted to apologize. I don't usually . . ." Garrod abruptly ran out of words, leaving himself helpless and vulnerable, but he saw the tinges of color rising in her cheeks, and he knew he had made contact with her on a level far removed from anything covered by what he had said.

"It's all right," she said quietly. "There was no need . . ."

"But there was." He was looking at her with gratitude, allowing the image of her to expand through his vision, when a pale blue Pontiac swished up to the kerb beside them. The driver, a cool-looking lieutenant in gold-rimmed glasses, was lowering his window before the car came to a halt.

"Let's go, Jane," he said crisply. "We're late."

The passenger door swung open and Jane, looking flustered, got in. Her lips moved silently. She looked out at Garrod as the car whisked her away and it seemed to him that her eyes were troubled, regretful. Or was she simply being apologetic for the suddenness of her departure?

Swearing bitterly under his breath, Garrod walked back to face. Lt. Col. Zitron.

IT WAS PAST midnight when Garrod arrived home. The domestic staff had gone to bed, but a glimmer of yellow light from the half-open door of the library suggested that Esther was still up. She did not read much, preferring to watch television, but she liked sitting in the library's brown friendliness. Garrod suspected this was because it was the only room he had not extensively modernised five years earlier, soon after he bought the place. He went in and found Esther curled up in a high-backed leather chair with television glasses covering her eyes.

"You're late." She raised one hand in greeting, but did not remove the screens from her eyes. "Where have you been?"

"I had to go to an Army research center at a place called Macon."

"What do you mean, 'at a place called Macon'?"

"That's the name of the place."

"You made it sound as if you expected me never to have heard of it."

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean . . ."

"Macon is in Georgia, right?"

"That's right."

"The rest of us aren't completely stupid, Alban." Esther adjusted her television glasses and wriggled to a more comfortable position.

"So who said . . . ?" Garrod bit his lip and went over to the sideboard where decanters glowed warmly in a pool of light. "Are you having a drink?"

"I don't need one, thanks."

"I don't need one either, but I'm going to enjoy it just the same." Garrod kept his voice level, wondering why

Esther was needling him. It was as if she had some advance knowledge of what he wanted to say. He mixed a weak Bourbon and water, and sat down close to the fireplace. The 'gray-and-white husk of a log lay in the hearth, crackling faintly, sending occasional orange sparks swirling up into the darkness of the flue.

"There's a whole sheaf of messages on the desk," Esther said disapprovingly. "A man in your position really shouldn't disappear for days on end without keeping in touch with his office."

"That's why I employ high-priced managers. If they can't keep things going for a few hours they're no good to me."

"The great mind mustn't be soiled by thinking about money. Is that it, Alban?"

"I don't claim to have a great mind."

"No, you don't come right out and say it, but you really set yourself apart. When you condescend to talk to people there's a little smile on your face which says, 'I know this remark is being wasted but I'll throw it in for amusement and see if anybody comes close to understanding it'."

"For Christ's sake!" Garrod leaned forward in his seat. "Esther, let's get a divorce."

She took off the glasses and looked at him. "Why?"

"Why? What's the point in our going on like this?"

"We've been doing it for quite a few years and you never mentioned divorce before."

"I know." Garrod took a long swallow of his drink. "But there has to be

a limit. This isn't what marriage is meant to be."

In a second Esther was out of her chair and peering closely into his face. She gave a shaky laugh. "By God, I believe it has finally happened to you."

"It?" A vision of full, silvery lips flashed into Garrod's mind.

"What's her name, Alban?"

He laughed in turn, incredulously. "There's no other woman involved."

"Did you meet her on this trip?"

"I tell you it's just *you*. I've had enough."

"She lives in Macon. That's why you suddenly decided to go there."

Garrod gave his wife a look of disdain, but inwardly he was afraid of her. "Let me spell it out for you—there is no other woman. Since we got married I haven't so much as held hands with anybody else. I just happen to think we've gone on too long."

"That's what I mean. You're a cold fish, Alban—I found that out pretty damn quick—but now something's got you going. And she must have been really something to light your little bonfire."

"I've had enough of this nonsense." Garrod got to his feet and walked across the room to his desk. "What do you say to a divorce?"

"I say—nothing doing, buster." Esther followed him, still holding her glasses, and he could hear dwarves' voices coming from the earpieces. "This is the first thing you've wanted from me since you discovered you didn't need Dad's money. This is the first thing you've asked me for—and I'm going to enjoy making sure you don't get it."

"You're a real treasure," he said heavily, unable to express his anger.

"I know." She went back to her chair, sat down and put the image-filled glasses on again. A look of peaceful concentration spread over her small features.

Garrod picked up the slim bundle of message tapes from his desk. Most of them were mechanical transcripts of voice messages, a system he found more convenient than having to play through a series of recordings. The one on top of the pile was timed only an hour earlier and it was from Theo McFarlane, his chief of research in the Portston laboratories. It said:

"STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL. I AM 90% CERTAIN OF ACHIEVING TRIGGERED EMISSION TONIGHT. I KNOW YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE PRESENT BUT I HAVEN'T GOT UNLIMITED PATIENCE, AL. I'LL HOLD OFF TILL MIDNIGHT. THEO."

A icy excitement gripped Garrod as he flicked through the sheaf and saw a series of messages on the same subject from McFarlane. They were timed at intervals right through the day. Glancing at his watch he saw the time was twenty-five after midnight. He walked up the room and threw the messages into Esther's lap to draw her attention from the television.

"Why did nobody contact me today and let me know what Theo was up to?"

"Nobody is permitted to interrupt your little hotrod jaunts, remember. That's why you employ managers, Alban, darling."

"You know the lab work is different," Garrod snapped, fighting an impulse to snatch the glasses from



Esther's face and wrench them in two. He hurried to the viewphone and punched in the number of the direct channel to McFarlane's office. A second later McFarlane's thin, bespectacled face appeared on the screen. His eyes blinked tiredly behind the double-concave lenses which made them look smaller than normal.

"There you are, Al," he said reprovingly. "I've been trying to get you all day."

"I was out of town. Have you done it yet?"

McFarlane shook his head. "Union trouble. The technicians insisted on stopping for coffee." He looked disgusted.

"You never could adjust to working with human beings, Theo. I'll be there in twenty minutes." Garrod broke the connection, ran through the house and out to the garage. He chose the rotary-engined Mercedes two-seater as being the best for a trip around the edge of the city. As he was hurling the little car down the winding shrub-walled road from the house it occurred to him that he had left without speaking to Esther, but then there was nothing to say except that he would get the divorce one way or the other—and that could wait till morning.

During the hectic drive he thought about the implications of the message he had received from McFarlane. In spite of nine years of continuous research, slow glass had retained its integrity in one vital respect—it refused to yield information any sooner than specified by the delay period built into its crystalline structure. A piece of Retardite one year thick retained its stored

images for one year, and no amount of coaxing by an army of research workers had persuaded it to do otherwise. Even with its inflexibility in this respect, Retardite had found thousands of applications in every field from costume jewelry to outer planet exploration—but had it been possible to change the delay period in retrospect, to release information at will, then slow glass would truly have come into its own.

The basis of the difficulty was the way in which images were not stored inside the material *as images*. Variations in the arrangement of light and shade were translated into stress patterns which gradually made their way from one face of the glass to the other. Discovery of this fact had solved one theoretical objection to the Retardite principle. In the early days, when it was thought that the time delay was a function of the thickness of the crystalline material, some physicists had pointed out that images passing through at an angle should have emerged considerably later than images which traversed the material at right angles. To overcome the anomaly it had been necessary to postulate an infinitely high index of refraction for Retardite, a measure which Garrod had instinctively disliked. Subsequently, he had found great personal satisfaction in establishing the true nature of the piezolucent transfer phenomenon, and in seeing it named the Garrod Effect in scientific texts.

Establishing the nature of the effect, however, had not altered the fact that there was no random access to the stored images. If the time delay had

been directly related to thickness it might have been possible to split Retardite into thinner sheets and get at the information sooner. As it was, any attempt—no matter how subtle or insidious—to interfere with the crystalline structure resulted in a near-instantaneous relieving of the stress patterns. There was not even a glimmer of released light. The material simply relaxed its grip on the past and became jet black, a vitreous slate awaiting the imprint of new memories.

Although he found it increasingly difficult to put in time in the laboratories Garrod still had strong personal interest in solving the problem of triggered emission. This sprang partly from his scientist's possessiveness regarding his own discovery, partly from a vague awareness that there were cases in which slow glass acted as a tantalus cup, torturing individuals whose overwhelming need was for immediate drafts of knowledge. Only recently Garrod had read a newspaper story about a judge who had died a few months after a five-year wait to learn if a man he had sent to the chair would be proved guilty by the piece of slow glass which had been sole witness to the murder. He could not remember the judge's name, but the reality of his suffering was an unwelcome part of Garrod's world picture.\*

Above the thoroughfare along which he was driving, the panels of slow glass which had already replaced streetlights glowed with the blue of the daytime sky, creating the effect of speeding

through a wide tunnel with rectangular holes cut in the roof. In one of them he glimpsed the silvery dart of an airliner which had flown over the spot earlier in the day.

The night security man saluted from his kiosk as Garrod swung the Mercedes in through the gates of the research and development building. Most of the block was in darkness but McFarlane's section was ablaze with golden light. Garrod slipped off his jacket and threw it onto a chair as he walked into the laboratory and saw a group of men gathered around one of the benches. The only one not in shirtsleeves was McFarlane himself—as always the research chief was wearing a neat, square-shouldered business suit. It was said that he had not once touched a soldering iron since the day he made management, but his control of what went on in his own department was absolute, and detailed.

"You're just in time," McFarlane said, nodding to Garrod. "I've a feeling we're going to connect."

"You're still following up on the modified Cerenkov radiation approach?"

"And getting results, too." McFarlane pointed at a pure black panel of slow glass which was mounted in a frame and surrounded by a complex of gray boxes, oscilloscopes and a lashed-up instrument panel. "That's a piece of three-day glass which was wiped clean yesterday. The images it picked up since then aren't due out this side until tomorrow, but I think we're going to drag 'em through a little faster."

"How do you know?"

\*See "Burden of Proof," *Analog*, May, 1967.

"Look at those diffraction patterns." McFarlane indicated a display tube. "See how different it is to what we usually get when we shoot X-rays through Retardite? That shimmering effect shows that the image velocity and the Cerenkov radiation velocity have begun to equalize."

"Maybe you've just slowed down the Cerenkov."

"I'm betting we've speeded up the image."

"Something wrong here," one of the technicians remarked in conversational tones. "The distance-over-time curve is starting to look . . . exponential."

Garrod examined the oscilloscope trace and thought of light pouring into the panel of slow glass, for perhaps thirty-six hours, now gathering on itself, forming a wave a peak . . .

"Cover your eyes," McFarlane shouted. "Get away from that thing!"

Garrod flung his arm over his face as the technicians stampeded outwards, then there was a silent, bleaching flash of brilliance; a flash which froze movement on punished retinas; a flash which clutched Garrod's heart because it should have been accompanied by the detonation of a hell-bomb. He lowered his arm and saw the other men only dimly through a screen of green and orange after-images. The slow glass panel was black as night once more, and as peaceful.

McFarlane spoke first, in a subdued voice. "I told you we'd squeeze some light out of that panel—and we sure as hell did."

"Is everybody all right?" Garrod

peered around the group who were slowly converging again on the bench. "Did anybody take it right in the face?"

They shook their heads. "We're all right, Mr. Garrod."

"We'll call it a night then. Book in a full night shift, and give your eyes plenty of time to recover before you drive home." Garrod turned to McFarlane. "You'll have to draw up a new set of safety procedures before taking this any further."

"Don't I know it!" McFarlane's eyes looked bruised behind their diminishing lenses. "But we got *light*, Al. That was the first time in nine solid years of trying that anybody ever modified a Retardite lattice and didn't simply relieve the stress patterns. We really got light."

"I'll say we did." Garrod picked up his jacket as they walked slowly towards McFarlane's private office. "You'd better get our patent lawyers on to it first thing in the morning. Are there any talkative types among your boys?"

"They know better."

"Fine. I don't know what the applications will be for this gadget of yours, but there'll be plenty of them."

"Weapons," McFarlane hazarded gloomily.

"I don't think so. Too cumbersome, and the range would be pretty short with atmospheric absorption. But there's flash photography. Signalling in space. I'll bet if you hauled a five-year panel all the way out to Uranus on a probe and triggered it the flash would be detectable on Earth."

McFarlane opened the door of his office. "Let's have a drink to cele-

brate—I've been saving a bottle for this occasion."

"I don't know, Theo."

"Come on, Al. Besides I've got a new line for you. How's this?" He pointed ahead with a fierce frown on his face, and shouted; "Stop fiddling with that belt, Van Allen!"

"Not bad. Not very good, but not bad either." Garrod smiled at his research chief who had been a friend since college days. They had a running joke which involved a fantasy in which all the great scientists who had given their names to discoveries were children in a classroom together. Even at a tender age each was concerned in some way with the field of research in which he would triumph in later life, but the harrassed teacher had no way of knowing this, and kept trying to force them to pay attention. So far in the fantasy sequence he had shouted, "What have you got in that bottle, Klein?" to an incipient topologist; "Stop that fidgeting, Brown," to the future discoverer of molecular agitation; and "Make up your mind, Heisenberg," to the child who would one day formulate the Uncertainty Principle. Garrod had almost stopped trying because it was difficult to find a new line with the required degree of universality, but McFarlane was still working away and produced a new line every week.

Garrod hesitated at the door. "It's a little early to celebrate. We still have to figure out why we got a runaway reaction and what to do about it."

"Now that we've got this far, the rest is only a matter of time," McFarlane said emphatically. "I'll guarantee you

that within three months you'll be able to take a piece of slow glass and view any scene in it at will—just like a home movie. Think what that's going to mean."

"Yeah, for people like the police." Garrod thought about his nameless judge. "And the Government."

McFarlane shrugged. "Spying, you mean? Glass eyes? Invasion of privacy? The only people who have to worry about that are the crooks." He took a bottle of whisky from a cupboard and poured two generous measures into gold-rimmed tumblers. "I'll tell you one thing, though—I wouldn't like to be any guy who's up to things he doesn't want his wife to know about."

"Neither would I," Garrod said. In the bottom of his glass, where the interplay of reflection and refraction created a miniature universe, he saw a girl with black hair and silver lips.

WHEN HE ARRIVED home an hour later he expected to find the house in darkness, but lights were on in several rooms and he saw Esther standing at the open front door of the house. She was wearing a belted tweed coat and had a scarf tied over her hair. Garrod got out of the Mercedes and, with a premonition of trouble, went up the steps. The wall lights showed that Esther's face was pale and streaked with tears. Was this, he wondered, a delayed reaction to his request for a divorce? Yet, she had seemed so cool . . .

"Alban," she said quickly, before he could speak. "I tried to get you at the plant but the patrol man said I had just missed you."

"Is there something wrong?"

"Will you drive me to see Dad?"

"Is he ill?"

"No. The police have arrested him."

Garrod almost burst out laughing.

"But that would be *lese majeste*! What's he supposed to have done?"

Esther covered her mouth with trembling hands as she spoke. "They're saying he killed a man."

## CHAPTER 6

"THE EVIDENCE is all there," Lieutenant Mayrick said, with an easy helpfulness which suggested he was so certain of his ground that he could see no danger in being frank. He was a thick-shouldered young man with prematurely graying hair and a scarred, competent face.

"What evidence? So far nobody has offered me any evidence." Garrod tried to sound as alert and competent as the lieutenant, but it had been an incredibly long day and the whisky he had drunk with McFarlane had died in him.

Mayrick's gaze was level. "I know who you are, Mr. Garrod. And I know how much money you have. But I also know that I'm not required to explain myself to you."

"Forgive me lieutenant—I'm very tired and all I want to do is go home and get to bed, but I know my wife won't let me sleep unless I can put her mind at ease about this thing. Now, what happened?"

"I don't know if this will help you put Mrs. Garrod's mind at ease." Mayrick lit a cigarette and threw the pack onto his desk.

"One of our patrol cars was going east on Ridge Avenue just before one o'clock and the officers in it found Mr. Livingstone's car sitting with one wheel up on the sidewalk. He was slumped over the steering wheel, drugged to the eyeballs. At the other side of the street they found a dead man who has since been identified as one William Kolkman. The reason he was dead was that he had been struck by an automobile moving at considerable speed. The front left-hand fender of Mr. Livingstone's car was dented in a manner exactly consistent with Kolkman's injuries, and we have already matched paint samples taken from his clothes with the paint on the car.

"How does all that sound to you?" Mayrick leaned back and puffed contentedly on his cigarette.

"It sounds like you've already convicted my father-in-law."

"That's your own reaction—all I did was summarize the evidence."

"I still can't take it in," Garrod said slowly. "There's this business about the drugs. Boyd Livingstone was born back in the Thirties, so he likes liquor—to him it isn't a drug—but he has a built-in antipathy to anything that comes out of a pillbox."

"We've given him a medical check-up, Mr. Garrod, and he's loaded with MSR." Mayrick opened a blue folder and placed some large photographs in front of Garrod. "Do these make it any more believable?"

The pictures, all with certified time-recording dials in the corners, showed Livingstone lying over the steering wheel of his car, close-ups of the dented fender, a shabbily-dressed

dead man crumpled in an appallingly large pool of blood, and general views of the accident scene under flood-lighting.

"What are these?" Garrod pointed to dark objects like broken rock scattered on the concrete of the street.

"Bits of caked mud, dislodged from inside the wheel arch by the impact" Mayrick smiled briefly. "That's something your realistic movie-makers forget about when they're staging accident scenes."

"I see." Garrod got to his feet. "Thanks for telling me all this, lieutenant. I'll just have to try making my wife face up to this thing."

"That's all right, Mr. Garrod."

They shook hands and Garrod left the small, coldly-lit office. He walked along the corridor and found Esther and Grant Morgan, the Livingstones' lawyer, in an anteroom near the police building's main entrance. Esther's brown eyes locked on his, pleading with him to say what she wanted him to say.

Garrod shook his head. "I'm sorry, Esther. It looks bad. I don't see how your father can avoid a manslaughter charge."

"But it's ridiculous!"

"To us—yes. To the police—well, they couldn't have got him more dead to rights."

"I think you'd better let me decide that, Al," Morgan put in. He was an aristocratic-looking man in his sixties, immaculately dressed even in the middle of the night. At that moment he was earning his retainer simply by exuding reassurance for Esther's benefit.

"We'll soon have this nonsense straightened out."

"Good luck," Garrod replied, causing Esther to glance angrily at him.

"Mr. Morgan," she said. "I know that all this has to be a mistake and I want to hear my father's side of it. When can I see him?"

"Right now—I think." Morgan opened the door, looked enquiringly at someone outside, then nodded in satisfaction. "It's all arranged, Esther. I want you not to worry about how things might seem at this minute." He ushered Esther and Garrod out into the corridor, where a police captain and two other men escorted them to a room at the rear of the building. As they entered the room a uniformed officer gathered coffee cups onto a tray and left. The captain and his two companions had a whispered conversation with Morgan and stepped back into the corridor, allowing him to close the door. Boyd Livingstone, fully dressed in a tuxedo, was lying on a hospital-type bed. His face was unnaturally pale but he gave Morgan and Garrod a wan smile as Esther ran to him.

"It's a hell of a mess," he whispered over her shoulder. "Are there any reporters out there?"

Morgan shook his head. "I'll handle the Press, Boyd," he said soothingly.

"Thanks, Grant, but we'll need experts on this job. You'd better get hold of the Party's publicity agent, Ty Beaumont, and get him to see me immediately. This is going to look bad and it's got to be handled the right way."

Listening to the conversation, Garrod was slightly taken aback until he



remembered that his father-in-law was the Republican Commonwealth candidate for Portston's representation on the County Board. He had never taken Livingstone's belated involvement in small-time politics seriously, but it looked as though Livingstone himself did, and no doubt the ultra-right Republican Commonwealth party would be unhappy about their man being charged with drug-abuse and manslaughter. Livingstone's particular crusade was against gambling, but he took a strong line on all kinds of vice.

Morgan wrote something in a notebook. "I'll get Beaumont on the phone, Boyd, but first things first. Were you hurt in the accident?"

Livingstone looked blank. "Hurt! How could I have been hurt?" he belatedly recovered some of his vigour. "I was driving home from the Opera House trustees' dinner when I started to feel a bit woozy. So I pulled into the side and waited for it to pass off. I guess I must have dozed off or passed out or something, but I wasn't involved in any accident. Not me!" His fatigue-reddened eyes surveyed the group belligerently and settled on Garrod. "Hello, Al."

Garrod nodded. "Boyd."

"All right, we'll come back to that in a minute," Morgan said, still making notes. "Was there much drug-taking at the dinner?"

"The usual amount, I guess. The waiters were distributing it like confetti."

"How much did you have?"

"Now, just a minute, Grant." Livingstone swung himself upright on the

bed. "You know I don't go in for that kind of thing."

"You're saying you had none?"

"Damn right, I am."

"Then how do you account for the fact that, along with the alcohol in your blood, the police surgeon found substantial traces of MSR?"

"MSR?" Livingstone wiped some perspiration from his forehead. "What in hell is MSR?"

"It's a kind of synthetic cannabis—a rather potent variety."

"My father obviously isn't feeling well," Esther said. "Why are you . . . ?"

"All these questions have to be asked," Morgan said with a firmness Garrod had not expected of him. "They *will* be asked, and we have to have a good set of answers ready."

"I'll give you a good answer." Livingstone tried to tap Morgan on the shoulder but his spatial judgement was so far off that his fingers prodded thin air. "Somebody slipped me the stuff. It was done on purpose—so that I'd lose the election."

Morgan sighed unhappily. "I'm afraid . . ."

"Don't heave your chest at me, Grant. I tell you that's what must have happened. Anyway, the drug question is irrelevant. They can't charge me with knocking this man down while driving under the influence of drugs—because I pulled over and stopped the car before anything happened."

Garrod moved over beside the bed. "That doesn't add up, Boyd. I've seen the photographic evidence."

"I don't care what photographs you've seen. I was *there*, and—even if somebody did half-poison me—I know

what I did and what I did not do." Livingstone caught Garrod's hand and held on to it, looking upwards into his face. Garrod felt a pang of pity for the other man and with it came a sudden illogical conviction that he was telling the truth, that in spite of all the conclusive evidence there was room for doubt.

Morgan put his notebook away. "I think I've got enough to go on in the meantime, Boyd. The first thing to do now is to get you out of here."

"I'm going to have another word with Lieutenant Mayrick," Garrod said impulsively. "Think back, Boyd. Is there anything else you can remember that might help?"

Livingstone eased himself back onto the pillow and closed his eyes. "I . . . I was sitting there at the curb . . . and I could hear the engine . . . no, that can't be right because I must have switched off . . . I . . . I see this man in front of me, and I'm coming up on him *fast* . . . the engine's very loud now . . . I hit the brake but it doesn't do any good . . . the smack, Al, that awful pulpy smack . . ." Livingstone stopped speaking, on a note of shock, as though he was learning something for the first time, and tears began to leak out from under his closed eyelids.

GARROD GOT UP EARLY in the morning and breakfasted alone because Esther had stayed overnight at her parents' home. His eyes had a gritty feeling caused by lack of sleep, but he drove straight to the plant with the intention of getting down to work with McFarlane and the company's patent lawyers. He found it impossible to

concentrate, however, and after an hour of futile trying delegated responsibility for the meeting to his chief executive, Max Fuente. In the privacy of his inner office, he called Portston police headquarters and asked to speak to Lieutenant Mayrick. The attractive-looking operator told him that Mayrick would not come on duty till noon.

It occurred to Garrod that he was being unreasonable. Morgan, with his trained legal mind, obviously believed in Livingstone's guilt. Esther had accepted it and, in the end, even Livingstone himself—yet something in the evidence seemed to be gnawing into Garrod's piece of mind. Or was this an example of the intellectual egotism of which he had been accused by Esther? When all others concerned believed that Livingstone had killed a man while driving his car in a drug-laden haze—was Alban Garrod prompted to confound them, and set himself apart, by discovering an unsuspected truth? *Even if that's the case, he decided, the end result will be the same.*

He thought for a moment, then decided to employ an old technique for stimulating inspiration. Taking a large block of paper from a drawer, he began writing on it—at widely-spaced intervals—headings covering every aspect he could remember of Mayrick's and Livingstone's statements. He next filled in sub-headings relating to details, no matter how trivial, and induced thoughts. By the time thirty minutes had passed the sheet was almost filled. Garrod rang for coffee and stared at the sheet while he sipped the hot liquid. Finally, part-way through the second

cup, he picked up his pen and drew a ring around a sentence Livingstone had used the previous night. It was under the heading, THE CAR, and read: "The engine is very loud now."

Garrod had been in Livingstone's turbine-powered Rolls, and he was familiar with the type of car. In his experience it was virtually impossible to hear the engine, even at full throttle.

While finishing the coffee he drew a ring round another sub-heading, then called Grant Morgan. "Good morning. How's the old man?"

"Fast asleep—under sedation." Morgan looked impatient. "Did you want to see me about anything special, Al? I'm working rather hard on Boyd's behalf."

"So am I, as a matter of fact. Last night he said something about having been drugged by someone who wanted him to lose his little election. I know how wild this sounds—but is there anybody who has a good reason to keep him off the County Board?"

"Now, Al, you're galloping . . ."

"Off in all directions. I know that, but will you answer my question, or will I make enquiries down town?"

Morgan shrugged, a strangely incongruous movement. "Well, you know how Boyd feels about gambling. He's been pushing for tighter controls on casinos for some time now, and if he makes the Board he's certain to force a big clamp-down. I doubt, though . . ."

"That's good enough. I'm not really interested in a motive—just the possibility. Now, have you ever been in Boyd's car?"

"A Rolls, isn't it? Yes, I've ridden with him several times."

"How does the engine sound?"

Morgan ventured a smile. "Has it got an engine? I had a feeling it was pulled along by an invisible wire."

"You mean you've never heard the engine?"

"Ah . . . yes."

"Then how do you explain this remark Boyd made last night?" Garrod picked up his block of paper and read, "The engine is very loud now."

"If I had to explain it I'd say that a possible side-effect of MSR is increased sensory awareness."

"Is this increased sensory awareness compatible with falling unconscious over the steering wheel?"

"I'm not a narcotics expert, but . . ."

"Forget it, Grant. I've taken up enough of your time." Garrod broke the connection and returned to studying his notes. A little before noon he told his secretary, Mrs. Werner, that he was going out on personal business, left the plant and drove to the police headquarters under a steel-gray sky. The building was crowded and he had to wait twenty minutes before being admitted to Lieutenant Mayrick's office.

"I'm sorry about the delay," Mayrick said when they were seated together at his desk, "but you're partly to blame for the overload of work in this department."

"How's that?"

"So many glass eyes in use these days. Peeping Toms used to present a minor problem—when there was a complaint the guy either ran off or you took him, and the risk involved stopped

it becoming too popular a pastime. Now you have people planting spyglass all over the place—hotel bedrooms, washrooms, everywhere you could think of. And when somebody notices it and puts in a complaint you have to stake the place out and wait for the peeper to come back and collect his property. Then you have to prove he was the one who put it there in the first place . . .”

“I’m sorry.”

Mayrick shook his head slightly. “Why did you come to see me?”

“Well, you must have guessed it’s about the charges against my father-in-law. Is your mind completely closed to the possibility that he just might have been framed?”

Mayrick smiled and reached for his cigarettes. “I know it isn’t the done thing to admit to having a closed mind about anything, but sometimes I get tired of trying to sound all liberal and aware, et cetera, so—yes, my mind is closed to that possibility. What now?”

“Do you mind if I raise a few points?”

“No. Go ahead.” Mayrick waved grandly, creating whirlpools of smoke.

“Thank you. Number one—I heard on the radio this morning that William Kolkman, the man who was killed, was a pool hall attendant down by the river. Now, what was he doing walking along Ridge Avenue, of all places, at that time of the night?”

“Couldn’t say. Perhaps he was going to burgle one of those custom-built homes—but that wouldn’t entitle motorists to declare open season on him.”

“You don’t think it’s important?”

“No.”

“Nor even relevant?”

“Nope. Have you any other points?”

“One of my father-in-law’s recollections of the accident is of hearing a loud engine noise, but . . .” Garrod hesitated, suddenly aware of how superficial his words must seem, “. . . but his car makes no sound at all.”

“It must be nice for your father-in-law having such a fine car,” Mayrick said in a carefully neutral voice. “How does that affect the case?”

“Well, if he heard . . .”

“Look, Mr. Garrod,” Mayrick said abruptly, losing patience, “leaving aside the fact that your father-in-law was so high on MSR that he probably thought he was flying a bomber—other people heard this supposedly noiseless automobile. I have signed statements from people who heard the impact, were on the scene within thirty seconds, found Kolkman still pumping out his life’s blood in the gutter, and saw Mr. Livingstone in the car which killed him.”

Garrod was shocked. “You didn’t mention the witnesses last night.”

“Perhaps that was because I was busy last night. And I’m going to be busy today.”

Garrod got to his feet, prepared to leave, but found himself still speaking in a stubborn voice. “Your witnesses didn’t actually see the accident?”

“No, Mr. Garrod.”

“What sort of street lighting is there in Ridge Avenue? Retardite panels?”

“Not yet.” Mayrick looked maliciously amused. “You see, the moneyed residents of that area have objected to big sheets of spyglass being hung up near their homes, and the city is still fighting them over it.”

"I see." Garrod numbed an apology for having intruded on the lieutenant's working day and left the building. The faint, illogical glimmer of hope that he could prove the world wrong about Livingstone's accident had vanished, yet he discovered he was unable to return to the plant. He drove north, travelling slowly at first, then picking up speed as he faintly admitted to himself where he was going.

Ridge Avenue was a tree-lined ribbon of ferrocrete which snaked up towards a minor offshoot of the Cascades. Garrod located the scene of the accident, indicated by yellow chalk marks on the road, and parked close by. Feeling strangely self-conscious, he got out of the car and surveyed the mid-day sleepiness of sloping green roofs, lawns and dark foliage. This was an area where there was no real need for Scenedows, the views from the houses being pleasant enough, but window-sized panels were still sufficiently expensive to make them good status symbols. Of the six dwellings which overlooked the place where the accident had occurred, two had windows which looked like rectangular sections chopped out of hillsides.

He got back into his car, picked up the viewphone and put a call through to his secretary. "Hello, Mrs. Werner. I want you to find out which store supplied a large Scenedow to the occupants of 2008 Ridge Avenue. Get on to it right away, please."

"Yes, Mr. Garrod." The miniature image of Mrs. Werner registered the disapproval which always accompanied any assignment she regarded as being outside her normal duties.

"When you've done that, contact the

manager of the store and get him to buy the Scenedow back again. He can make up any reason he likes and pay any price."

"Yes, Mr. Garrod." Mrs. Werner's face darkened even further. "What then?"

"Have it delivered to my home. By tonight, if possible."

GARROD HAD INTENDED staying away from the office for an indefinite period, but an absence of only five days had built up such a pressure of work, coupled with hints of resignation from Mrs. Werner, that he reluctantly agreed to put in several hours at the plant. He slid his car into its reserved slot in the parking lot and sat for a moment trying to shake off his tiredness. The early evening sun was flooding the world with a red-gold light which made the surrounding buildings seem curiously unreal, and in the distance—framed by industrial perspectives—he could see tiny white figures playing a game of tennis. A beam of mellow, nostalgic light picked out the silent players, translating them into a perfect Augustin miniature. Garrod had a vague recollection of observing the same scene years earlier, and the memory was charged with significance as though it was connected with an important phase of his life, but he could not pinpoint the occasion. The sound of footsteps in the gravel interrupted his thoughts and he turned to see Theo McFarlane approaching the car. He lifted his briefcase and got out.

McFarlane pointed at him. "You never change, do you, Planck?"

"Give it up, Mac." Garrod nodded a greeting. "Any developments?"

"Nothing so far. I've been plotting a whole range of frequencies and running the time-over-distance curves through the computer, but it's bound to take a little while before we strike lucky. How about you?"

"Much the same, except that I'm experimenting with heterodyning several frequencies at once to see if it's possible to speed up the pendulum effect."

"I think you're trying to push too fast, Al," McFarlane said doubtfully. "We've triggered about fifty more panels in the lab and got runaways every time. I quite like this multiple frequency approach of yours, but I honestly don't see it stabilizing the . . ."

"I've already told you why I can't afford to hang around. Esther believes her father couldn't take a spell in prison, from the health point of view, and he's facing political death unless . . ."

"But—Al! Even if somebody wanted to frame him they just couldn't have done it—not in those circumstances. I mean, it's so painfully obvious that he knocked a man down and killed him."

"Maybe it's too obvious," Garrod said doggedly. "Maybe it's all too pat."

McFarlane sighed and drew his toe across the gravel, exposing damp layers. "And you shouldn't be working at home with two-year glass, Al. You saw the kind of flash we got with only a two-day build-up."

"There's no heat storage. It isn't as if a runaway would set my lab on fire."

"Even so . . ."

"Theo," Garrod cut in. "Don't fight me on this."

McFarlane raised his square-pointed shoulders in resignation. "Me? Fight you? I'm a mental-judoist from way back. You know my philosophy for dealing with people—there can be no action without reaction."

Suddenly, inexplicably, his words seemed to spear right through Garrod. McFarlane waved good-bye and walked towards his own car. Garrod tried to wave back, but all his attention was drawn inwards to the disturbances inside his own body. His knees felt loose, his heart had lapsed into an unsteady, lumping rhythm, and a chill extended downwards from stomach to groin. In his head there was a pressure which rapidly built up to a peak and exploded in a kind of psychic orgasm.

"Theo," he said softly, "I don't need the slow glass—I know how it was done."

McFarlane failed to hear him, got into his car and drove away. Garrod stood absolutely still in the center of the parking lot until the other man's car had vanished from sight, then he emerged from his trance and ran towards his office. Mrs. Werner was waiting for him, her sallow face taut with impatience.

"I can only stay behind for two hours," she said, "so it would . . ."

Garrod brushed past her. "Go home now. I'll see you in the morning."

He went into his private office, slammed the door and threw himself into his chair. *Action and reaction*. It was all so simple. A car and a man collide at speed, and with sufficient force to dent the vehicle's fender and to render the human body lifeless. Because cars usually move quickly and



men usually move slowly, an investigator coming on the scene is preconditioned to interpret it in only one way. In the context of everyday life, the car must have struck the man; but, treating it as a proposition in pure mechanics, the same fatal result would be obtained if the man struck the car.

Garrod nursed his head in his hands as he tried to visualize the method: You drug the driver of the car, carefully judging the amount and the time at which the dose is administered so that he will become incapable of control at roughly the location you desire. If he kills himself or anybody else in the process, this is an added benefit, and you do not need to put Phase Two of the plan into action. But if he brings his car safely to a halt, you are ready with a suitable victim who has been stunned or doped into unconsciousness. You suspend him from a vehicle—a breakdown truck with projecting crane would be ideal—and you smash him into the stationary car. He bounces off it, to be found lying dead several yards away, while you are escaping from the scene at high speed, probably without lights.

Taking his block of paper from a drawer, Garrod ticked off all the peculiar features of the case which could be accommodated by his new theory. It accounted for Kolkman's presence in Ridge Avenue at that time of night. It explained the loud engine noise which had been heard by Livingstone and the other witnesses. "I hit the brake but it doesn't do any good," Livingstone had said while still in shock—hitting the brake would have changed nothing when his car was not moving.

And how could the crime be detected at this stage? The dead man would have traces of a drug in his blood, or would have an extra injury not consistent with the "accident." His clothing would have been marked by a hook or other means of suspension, and a check of slow glass monitors on the roads leading to the Ridge Avenue area could prove that a breakdown truck or other suitable vehicle had been in the right place at the right time.

Garrod decided to call Grant Morgan and was turning to the viewphone when it chimed to announce an incoming call. He pressed the acceptance button and found himself looking at his wife. The background of shelves and miscellaneous equipment told him Esther was in his laboratory at home.

Esther touched her coppery hair nervously. "Alban, I . . ."

"How did you get in there?" he demanded. "I locked the door, and I told you to keep away from the place."

"I know you did, but I heard a kind of buzzing sound so I took the spare key the cleaners use and came in."

Garrod went rigid with alarm. The buzzer must have been the automatic monitor signalling that the Scenedow's piezoelectric constant was a constant no longer and had begun to increase. His equipment was programmed to cut out the radiation bombardment when this happened, but there was absolutely no guarantee that it would have any effect. The slow glass panel could erupt like a nova at any time.

" . . . Scenedow is behaving strangely," Esther was saying. "It has got a lot brighter, and everything has speeded up in it. Look." The view-

phone panned round and came to rest with the Scenedow filling the screen. Garrod found himself looking at a tree-lined lake with a range of mountains in the background. The scene should have been peaceful, but instead it was suffused with unnatural activity. Clouds swirled across the sky, animals and birds were nearly-invisible blurs of speed, and the sun was falling like a bomb.

Garrod tried to keep the panic in his voice under control. "Esther, that panel is going to blow. You've got to get out of the laboratory right now and close the door behind you. Go immediately!"

"But you told me we might see something in it which would help Dad."

"Esther," he shouted, "if you don't get out of there right now you'll never see anything again! For Christ's sake, run!"

There was a pause, then he heard the sound of her running footsteps and the slamming of the door. His raw fear ebbed slightly—Esther was safe—but the spectacle of the Scenedow preparing to annihilate two years of stored sunlight in one withering flash held him motionless in his chair. The sun plunged behind the mountains and darkness fell—but only for one minute in which the moon crossed the sky like a silver bullet. Another day came as a ten-second blast of hellfire, then . . .

The overloaded viewphone screen went blank.

Garrod wiped a cool film of sweat from his forehead and a moment later the viewphone circuits established themselves through reserve channels.

When the picture reappeared the expended Scenedow was a panel of polished obsidian, black as midnight. The sections of the laboratory he could see at the sides of the slow glass panel looked strangely colorless, as though seen in monochrome television. A few seconds later he heard the door opening and then Esther's voice.

"Alban," she said timidly. "The room has changed. There's no color left in anything."

"You'd better stay out of there till I get back."

"But it's safe now—and the room's all white. Look at it." The viewphone panned again and he saw Esther, her red hair and bottle-green dress standing out with incredible vividness against the bleached ghost of a room. Faint ripples of a new alarm began to spread through Garrod's mind.

"Listen," he said, voicing his unease, "I still think it would be better if you get out of there."

"But everything's so *different*. Look at this vase—it used to be blue." Esther turned the little vase over, revealing a disk of its original coloring on the underside which had been protected from the light. Garrod's sense of alarm grew stronger and he tried to force his numbed brain into action. Now that the Scenedow had given up its stored light, what danger could there possibly be in the laboratory? The light had been-absorbed by the walls and ceiling and . . .

"Cover your eyes and get out, Esther," he said hoarsely. "The place is full of experimental pieces of slow glass and some of them have delays of only . . ."

Garrod's voice died as the screen lit up yet again. Esther screamed through a network of brilliant rays and her image flared with a ghastly radiance, like that of someone caught in a cross-fire of laser beams. Garrod ran for the door of his office, but Esther's voice pursued him into the corridor and all the way home.

"I'm blind," she was screaming. "I'm blind!"

## CHAPTER 7

**E**RIC HUBERT WAS A surprisingly young man to have reached the pinnacle of his profession. He was plump, pink and probably had lost his hair prematurely, because he was wearing one of the ultra-new spray-on wigs. A black organic adhesive had been painted over his scalp, forming an exaggerated widow's peak, and black silky fuzz had been air-blasted onto it. Garrod found it difficult to cast him as one of the best eye specialists in the western hemisphere. He felt obscurely glad that Esther could not see Hubert as he sat bolt upright at the other side of the huge, smooth desk.

"This is the moment we've all been waiting for," Hubert said in a deep, drawling voice which was completely at variance with his appearance. "All those tiresome tests are behind you now, Mrs. Garrod."

*This sounds bad, Garrod thought. If the news was good would he have started off like that?* Esther leaned forward slightly, her small face apparently composed behind the tinted glasses. Hubert's relaxed tones seemed to be providing comfort in her darkness.

Garrod, escaping into irrelevancy, remembered a middle-aged friend of his Aunt Marge's who wanted to learn the piano and, being self-conscious about her age, had chosen a blind tutor.

"What did the tests show?" Esther's voice was firm and clear.

"Well, you've taken a real punch on the jaw with this one, Mrs. Garrod. The cornea and lens capsule of each eye have been opaqued by the flash, and—at the present state of the art—there is nothing that optical surgery can do for the condition."

Garrod shook his head disbelievingly. "Surely people get cornea transplants every day. And the opacity of the lens—isn't that the same as a cataract? What's to stop you performing both operations at suitable intervals?"

"We're dealing with an entirely new physical condition here. The actual *structure* of the cornea has been altered in such a way that grafts would be rejected within a few days. In fact, we're lucky that progressive degeneration of the tissue hasn't taken place. We could, of course, remove the lens capsules in the same way—as you quite rightly pointed out—we treat an ordinary cataract." Hubert paused and fingered his incongruously demonic widow's peak. "But without a healthy, transparent cornea in front to transmit light your wife would be no better off."

Garrod glanced at Esther's peaceful face and quickly looked away again. "I must say I find it utterly incredible that a pig's heart could be put into my chest almost as a matter of routine, yet a simple eye operation . . ."

"In this case the operation would not be simple, Mr. Garrod," Hubert said.

"Look, your wife has taken a bad kick on the shins, and now she'll just have to get up and keep right on walking."

"Is that so?" Hubert's trick of using analogies like punches on the jaw and kicks on the shin when referring to the catastrophe of being blinded suddenly enraged Garrod. "It seems to me that . . ."

"Alban!" Esther's voice was strangely regal. "Mr. Hubert has given me the best attention and advice that money can buy. And I am sure he must have many other patients to attend."

"You don't seem to understand what he's saying." Garrod could feel the panic building up inside him.

"But I understand perfectly, darling. I'm blind—that's all there is to it." Esther smiled at a point just to the right of Garrod's shoulder and took off her glasses, revealing the blanched orbs that were her eyes. "Now take me home."

GARROD COULD THINK of only one way to describe his reaction to Esther's courage and self-possession—he had been humbled.

The whole way down to the street level in the elevator he tried vainly to think of something to say, but his silence seemed not to trouble her. She stood holding his arm with both hands, head well back, smiling slightly. In the main entrance of the Medical Arts building several men were waiting with cameras.

"I'm sorry, Esther," Garrod whispered. "There are television crews waiting—they must have been tipped off we were in town."

"It doesn't matter. You're a famous

man, Alban." She held his arm even more tightly as they passed through the group of newsmen and got into the waiting limousine. Garrod refused to make any comment for the benefit of the microphones, and in a few seconds the limousine was surging away towards the airport. Esther had been exaggerating about his fame. He was at the center of two separate stories which had caught and held public interest—one was a sensationalized version of how he had single-handedly exposed a Portston gambling syndicate's attempt to ruin his father-in-law; the other was a multi-layered story of secret slow glass research producing a fearsome new weapon which had claimed the inventor's wife as its first victim. Garrod's early attempts to make the news media get the facts into perspective had achieved exactly the opposite effect, and he had adopted a policy of non-communication.

Arriving at the airport, Garrod picked out Lou Nash's red-bearded face above the crowd and steered Esther towards him. Other reporters and cameramen were waiting near his aircraft but they got airborne quickly and made the brief northwards hop to Portston. A larger crowd of newsmen were waiting but at this end he had the help of Manston, his public relations manager, and in a surprisingly short time they were at home.

"Let's sit in the library," Esther said. "It's the one room I can see without eyes."

"Of course." He ushered her to her favourite armchair, and sat down opposite. The cool brown silence of the room closed around them.

"You must be tired," he said after a minute. "I'll have some coffee brought in."

"I don't want anything."

"A drink?"

"Nothing. I just want to sit here with you, Alban. There are so many adjustments I have to make . . ."

"I see. Is there anything I can do?"

"Just be with me."

Garrod nodded and sat back to watch the late afternoon sun cross the high windows. The old clock in the corner ticked stolidly, creating and destroying distant universes with each sweep of its pendulum.

"Your parents will soon be arriving," he said once.

"No—I told them we wanted to be on our own tonight."

"But the company would be good for you."

"You're all the company I need."

They had dinner alone then returned to the library. Each time Garrod tried to start a conversation Esther made it clear that she preferred not to talk. Garrod glanced at his watch—midnight was far away, at the crest of a mountain of time.

"How about the sound books I got you? Wouldn't you like to listen to something?"

Esther shook her head. "You know I never cared much for reading."

"But this would be different. It would be more like listening to radio."

"I could listen to real radio if I wanted."

"The point is . . . Forget it." Garrod forced himself to remain silent, picked up a book and began to read.

"What are you doing?"

"Nothing—just reading."

"Alban, there is something I would quite enjoy," Esther said after perhaps fifteen minutes.

"What is it?"

"Could we watch some television together?"

"Ah . . . I don't know what you mean."

"We could wear a set each." Esther seemed childishly eager. "I'll listen to the sound on my set and if I'm missing anything on vision you can tell me what's happening. That way we would both be taking part in it together."

Garrod hesitated. The word "together" had cropped up again, as happened so frequently in Esther's conversation these days. Neither he nor she had ever again referred to the question of his divorce.

"All right, honey," he said. He went to a drawer, took out two tri-di sets and placed one of them on Esther's patiently expectant face. The uphill climb towards midnight had become longer and steeper.

ON THE FOURTH MORNING he gripped Esther's shoulders and held her face-to-face with him. "I accept it," he said. "I accept that it is partially my fault that you've lost your sight, but I can't take any more of this."

"Any more of what, Alban?" She looked hurt and surprised.

"This *punishment*." Garrod drew a quivering breath. "You're blind, but I'm not blind. I have to go on with my work . . ."

"That's why you employ managers."

". . . and with my life, Esther."

"You still want a divorce!" Esther

(Continued on page 85)

*A James Tiptree story always surprises and delights in its fresh turns, and is marked by the way in which a deep sense of the human condition is skillfully blended with sound science fiction. His latest is no exception, dealing as it does with a cataclysm that changes the world and—*

# THE MAN WHO WALKED HOME

## JAMES TIPTREE, JR.

***Illustrated by DAVID COCKRUM***

*—Transgression! Terror! And he thrust and lost there, punched into impossibility, abandoned, never to be known how, the wrong man in the most wrong of all wrong places in that unimaginable collapse of never-to-be-reimagined mechanism, he stranded, undone, his lifeline severed, he in that nanosecond knowing his only tether parting, going away, the longest line to life withdrawing, winking out, disappearing forever beyond his grasp, telescoping away from him into the closing vortex beyond which lay his home, his life, his only possibility of being; seeing it sucked back into the deepest maw, melting, leaving him orphaned on what never-to-be-known shore of total wrongness—of beauty beyond joy, perhaps? Of horror? Of nothingness? Of profound otherness only, it may be—whatever it was, that place into which he transgressed, certainly it could not support his life there, his violent and violating aberrance; and he, fierce, brave, crazy—clenched into one fist of protest, one body-fist of utter repudiation of himself there in that place, forsaken there—what did he do? He rejected, exiled, hungering homewards more desperate than any lost beast driving for*

*its unreachable home, his home, his home—and no way, no transport, no vehicle, means, machinery, no force but his intolerable resolve aimed homeward along that vanishing vector, that last and only lifeline—he did, what?*

*He walked.*

*Home.*

**P**RECISELY WHAT HASHED UP in the work of the major industrial lessee of the Bonneville Particle Acceleration Facility was never known. Or rather, all those who might have been able to diagnose the original malfunction were themselves obliterated almost at once in the greater catastrophe which followed.

The nature of this second cataclysm was not at first understood either. All that was ever certain was that at 1153.6 of May 2, 1989 Old Style, the Bonneville laboratories and all their personnel were transformed into an intimately disrupted form of matter resembling a high-energy plasma, which became rapidly airborne to the accompaniment of radiating seismic and atmospheric events.

The disturbed area unfortunately



included an operational MIRV Watchdog bomb.

In the confusions of the next hours the earth's population was substantially reduced, the biosphere was altered, and the earth itself was marked with numbers of more conventional craters. For some years thereafter the survivors were preoccupied with other concerns and the peculiar dust-bowl at Bonneville was left to weather by itself in the changing climatic cycles.

It was not a large crater; just over a kilometer in width and lacking the usual displacement lip. Its surface was covered with a finely divided substance which dried into dust. Before the rains began it was almost perfectly flat. Only in certain lights, had anyone been there to inspect it, a small surface marking or abraded place could be detected almost exactly at the center.

A decade after the disaster a party of short brown people appeared from the south, together with a flock of somewhat atypical sheep. The crater at this time appeared as a wide shallow basin in which the grass did not grow well, doubtless from the almost complete lack of soil microorganisms. However neither this nor the surrounding vigorous grass were found to harm the sheep. A few crude hogans went up at the southern edge and a faint path began to be traced across the crater itself, passing by the central bare spot.

One Spring morning two children who had been driving sheep across the crater came screaming back to camp. A monster had burst out of the ground before them, a huge flat animal making a dreadful roar. It vanished in a flash



and a shaking of the earth, leaving an evil smell. The sheep had run away.

Since this last was visibly true, some elders investigated. Finding no sign of the monster and no place in which it could hide, they settled for beating the children, who settled for making a detour around the monster-spot, and nothing more occurred for a while.

The following Spring the episode was repeated. This time an older girl was present but she could add only that the monster seemed to be rushing flat out along the ground without moving at all. And there was a scraped place in the dirt. Again nothing was found; an evil-ward in a cleft stick was placed at the spot.

When the same thing happened for the third time a year later, the detour was extended and other charm-wands were added. But since no harm seemed to come of it and the brown people had seen far worse, sheep-tending resumed as before. a few more instantaneous apparitions of the monster were noted, each time in the Spring.

In the second decade of the new era a tall man limped down the hills from the north, pushing his pack upon a bicycle wheel. He camped on the far side of the crater, and soon found the monster-site. He attempted to question people about it, but no one understood him, so he traded a knife for some meat. Although he was obviously feeble, something about him dissuaded them from killing him, and this proved wise because he later assisted the women to treat several sick children.

He spent much time around the place of the apparition and was nearby when it made its next appearance. This

excited him very much, and he did several inexplicable but apparently harmless things, including moving his camp into the crater by the trail. He stayed on for a full year watching the site and was close by for its next manifestation. After this he spent a few days making a new charm for the spot and then left, hobbling, as he had come.

More decades passed. The crater eroded and a rain-gully became an intermittent streamlet across one edge of the basin. The brown people and their sheep were attacked by a band of grizzled men, after which the survivors went away eastward. The winters were now frost-free; aspen and eucalyptus sprouted in the moist plain. Still the crater remained treeless, visible as a flat bowl of grass, and the bare place at the center remained. The skies cleared somewhat.

After another three decades a larger band of black people with ox-drawn carts appeared and stayed for a time, but left again when they too saw the thunderclap-monster. A few other vagrants straggled by.

Five decades later a small permanent settlement had grown up on the nearest range of hills, from which men riding on small ponies with dark stripes down their spines herded humped cattle near the crater. A herdsman's hut was built by the streamlet, which in time became the habitation of an olive-skinned, red-haired family. In due course one of this clan again observed the monster-flash, but these people did not depart. The object the tall man had placed was noted and left undisturbed.

The homestead at the crater's edge grew into a group of three and was

joined by others, and the trail across it became a cartroad with a log bridge over the stream. At the center of the still-faintly-discernible crater the cartroad made a bend, leaving a grassy place which bore on its center about a square meter of curiously impacted bare earth and a deeply-etched sandstone rock.

The apparition of the monster was now known to occur regularly each Spring on a certain morning in this place, and the children of the community dared each other to approach the spot. It was referred to in a phrase that could be translated as "the Old Dragon." The Old Dragon's appearance was always the same: a brief, violent thunderburst which began and cut off abruptly, in the midst of which a dragon-like creature was seen apparently in furious motion on the earth although it never actually moved. Afterwards there was a bad smell and the earth smoked. People who saw it from close by spoke of a shivering sensation.

Early in the second century two young men rode into town from the north. Their ponies were shaggier than the local breed and the equipment they carried included two box-like objects which the young men set up at the monster site. They stayed in the area a full year, observing two materialisations of the Old Dragon, and they provided much news and maps of roads and trading-towns in the cooler regions to the north. They built a windmill which was accepted by the community and offered to build a lighting machine, which was refused. Then they departed with their boxes after unsuc-

cessfully attempting to persuade a local boy to learn to operate one.

In the course of the next decades other travellers stopped to marvel at the monster, and there was sporadic fighting over the mountains to the south. One of the armed bands made a cattle-raid into the crater hamlet. It was repulsed, but the raiders left a spotted sickness which killed many. For all this time the bare place at the crater's center remained, and the monster made his regular appearances, observed or not.

The hill-town grew and changed and the crater hamlet grew to be a town. Roads widened and linked into networks. There were grey-green conifers in the hills now, spreading down into the plain, and chirruping lizards lived in their branches.

At century's end a shabby band of skin-clad squatters with stunted milk-beasts erupted out of the west and were eventually killed or driven away, but not before the local herds had contracted a vicious parasite. Veterinaries were fetched from the market-city up north, but little could be done. The families near the crater moved to the hill-town. Decades later still cattle of a new strain reappeared in the plain and the deserted crater hamlet was reoccupied. Still the bare center continued annually to manifest the monster and he became an accepted phenomenon of the area. On several occasions parties came from the distant Northwest Authority to observe it.

The crater hamlet flourished and grew into the fields where cattle had grazed and part of the old crater became the town park. A small seasonal

tourist industry based on the monster-site developed. The townspeople rented rooms for the appearances and many more-or-less authentic monster-relics were on display in the local taverns.

Several cults had grown up around the monster. One persistent belief was that it was a devil or damned soul forced to appear on earth in torment to expiate the catastrophe of two centuries back. Others believed that it, or he, was some kind of messenger whose roar portended either doom or hope according to the believer. One very vocal sect taught that the apparition registered the moral conduct of the townspeople over the past year, and scrutinised the annual apparition for changes which could be interpreted for good or ill. It was considered lucky, or dangerous, to be touched by some of the dust raised by the monster. In every generation at least one small boy would try to touch the monster with a stick, usually acquiring a broken arm and a lifelong tavern tale. Pelting the monster with stones or other objects was a popular sport, and for some years people systematically flung prayers and flowers at it. Once a party tried to net it and were left with strings and vapor. The area itself had long since been fenced off at the center of the park.

Through all this the monster made his violently enigmatic annual appearance, sprawled furiously motionless, unreachably roaring.

Only as the third century of the new era went by was it apparent that the monster had been changing slightly. He was now no longer on the earth but had an arm and a leg thrust upward

in a kicking or flailing gesture. As the years passed he began to change more quickly until at the end of the third century he had risen to a contorted crouching pose, arms outflung as if frozen in gyration. His roar, too, seemed somewhat differently pitched and the earth after him smoked more and more.

It was then widely felt that the man-monster was about to do something, to make some definitive manifestation, and a series of natural disasters and marvels gave support to a vigorous cult teaching this doctrine. Several religious leaders journeyed to the town to observe the apparitions.

However, the decades passed and the man-monster did nothing more than turn slowly in place, so that he now appeared to be in the act of sliding or staggering while pushing himself backwards like a creature blown before a gale. No wind, of course, could be felt, and presently the general climate quieted and nothing came of it all.

Early in the fifth century New Calendar three survey parties from the North Central Authority came through the area and stopped to observe the monster. A permanent recording device was set up at the site, after assurances to the townfolk that no hardscience was involved. A local boy was trained to operate it; he quit when his girl left him but another volunteered. At this time nearly everyone believed that the apparition was a man, or the ghost of one. The record-machine boy and a few others such as the school mechanics teacher referred to him as The Man John. In the next decades the roads were greatly improved; and all

forms of travel increased and there was talk of building a canal to what had been the Snake River.

One May morning at the end of Century Five a young couple in a smart green mule-trap came jogging up the highroad from the Sandreas Rift Range to the southwest. The girl was golden-skinned and chatted with her young husband in a language unlike that ever heard by the Man John either at the end or the beginning of his life. What she said to him has, however, been heard in every age and tongue.

"Oh Serli, I'm so glad we're taking this trip now! Next summer I'll be too busy with Baby."

To which Serli replied as young husbands often have, and so they trotted up to the town's inn. Here they left trap and bags and went in search of her uncle who was expecting them there. The morrow was the day of the Man John's annual appearance, and her Uncle Laban had come from the MacKenzie History Museum to observe it and to make certain arrangements.

They found him with the town school instructor of mechanics, who was also the recorder at the monster-site. Presently Uncle Laban took them all with him to the town mayor's office to meet with various religious personages. The mayor was not unaware of the tourist value of the "monster," but he took Uncle Laban's part in securing the cultists' grudging assent to the MacKenzie authorities' secular interpretation, which was made easier by the fact that they disagreed among themselves. Then, seeing how pretty

the niece was, the mayor took them all home to dinner.

When they returned to the inn for the night it was a brawl with holiday makers.

"Whew," said Uncle Laban. "I've talked myself dry, sister's daughter. What a weight of holy nonsense is that Resurrection female! Serli, my lad, I know you have questions. Let me hand you this to read, it's the guide book we're giving 'em to sell. Tomorrow I'll answer for it all." And he disappeared into the crowded tavern.

So Serli and his bride took the pamphlet upstairs to bed with them, but it was not until the next morning at breakfast that they found time to read it.

"All that is known of John Delgano," read Serli with his mouth full, "Comes from two documents left by his brother Carl Delgano in the archives of the MacKenzie Group in the early years after the holocaust." Put some honey on this cake, Mira my dove. Verbatim transcript follows, this is Carl Delgano speaking.

"I'm not an engineer or an astronaut like John, I ran an electronics repair shop in Salt Lake City. John was only trained as a spaceman; the slump wiped all that out. So he tied up with this commercial group who were leasing part of Bonneville. They wanted a man for some kind of hard vacuum tests, that's all I knew about it. John and his wife moved to Bonneville, but we all got together several times a year, our wives got on real good. John had two kids, Clara and Paul.

"The tests were all supposed to be secret, but John told me confidentially

they were trying for an anti-gravity chamber. I don't know if it ever worked. That was the year before.

"Then that winter they came down for Christmas and John said they had something new. He was all lit up. A temporal displacement, he called it; some kind of time effect. He said the chief honcho, the boss man was like a real mad scientist. Big ideas. He kept adding more angles every time some other project would quit and leave equipment he could lease. No, I don't know who the top company was—maybe an insurance conglomerate, they had all the cash, didn't they? And I guess they'd pay to catch a look at the future, that figures. Anyway, John was all gung-ho and Katharine was scared, that's natural. She pictured him like, you know, H.G. Wells—walking around in some future world. John told her it wasn't like that at all. All they'd get would be this kind of flicker, like a second or two. All kinds of complications—Yes, yes, my greedy piglet, some brew for me too. This is thirsty work!

"So . . . 'I remember I asked him, what about the earth moving? I mean, you could come back in a different place, right? He said they had that all figured. A spatial trajectory. Katharine was so scared we shut up. John told her, don't worry, I'll come home. But he didn't. Not that it makes any difference, of course, everything was wiped out. Salt Lake too. The only reason I'm here is that I went up by Calgary to see Mom, April twenty-ninth. May second it all blew. I didn't find you folks at MacKenzie until July. I guess I may as well stay. That's all I know about John, except that he was

an all-right guy. If that accident started all this it wasn't his fault.

"The second document"—In the name of love, little mother, do I have to read all this! Oh very well; a kiss, please, Madam. Must you look so ineffable? . . . 'The second document. Dated in the year eighteen, New Style, written by Carl—see the old handwriting, my plump pigeon. Oh, very well, very well.' Written at Bonneville Crater.

"I have seen my brother John Delgano. When I knew I had the rad sickness I came down here to look around. Salt Lake's still hot. So I came over here by Bonneville. You can see the crater where the labs were, it's grassed over. It's different, it's not radioactive. My film's ok. There's a bare place in the middle. Some Indios here told me a monster shows up here every year in the spring. I saw it myself a couple of days after I got here but I was too far away to see much, except I'm sure it's a man. In a vacuum suit. There was a lot of noise and dust, took me by surprise. It was all over in a second. I figure it's pretty close to the day, I mean, May second, old.

"So I hung around a year and he showed up again yesterday. I was on the face side and I could see his face through the faceplate. It's John all right. He's hurt. I saw blood on his mouth and his suit is frayed some. He's lying on the ground. He didn't move while I could see him but the dust boiled up, like a man sliding onto base without moving. His eyes are open like he was looking. I don't understand it any way, but I know it's John, not a ghost. He was in exactly the same

position each time and there's a loud crack like thunder and another sound like a siren, very fast. And an ozone smell, and smoke. I felt a kind of shudder.

"I know it's John there and I think he's alive. I have to leave here now to take this back while I can still walk. I think somebody should come here and see. Maybe you can help John. Signed, Carl Delgano.

"These records were kept by the Mackenzie Group but it was not for several years—' Etcetera, first light-print, etcetera, archives, analysts, etcetera—very good! Now it is time to meet your uncle, my edible one, after we go upstairs for just a moment."

"No, Serli, I will wait for you downstairs," said Mira prudently.

When they came into the town park Uncle Laban was directing the installation of a large durite slab in front of the enclosure around the Man John's appearance-spot. The slab was wrapped in a curtain to await the official unveiling. Townspeople and tourists and children thronged the walks and a Resurrection choir was singing in the bandshell. The morning was warming up fast. Vendors hawked ices and straw toys of the monster and flowers and good-luck confetti to throw at him. Another religious group stood by in dark robes; they belonged to the Repentance church beyond the park. Their pastor was directing somber glares at the crowd in general and Mira's uncle in particular.

Three official-looking strangers who had been at the inn came up and introduced themselves to Uncle Laban as observers from Alberta Central.

They went on into the tent which had been erected over the enclosure, carrying with them several pieces of equipment which the town-folk eyed suspiciously.

The mechanics teacher finished organizing a squad of students to protect the slab's curtain, and Mira and Serli and Laban went on into the tent. It was much hotter inside. There were rings of benches around a railed enclosure about twenty feet in diameter. Inside the railing the earth was bare and scuffed. Several bunches of flowers and blooming poinciana-branches leaned against the rail. The only thing inside the rail was a rough sandstone rock with markings etched on it.

Just as they came in a small boy raced across the open center and was yelled at by everybody. The officials from Alberta were busy at one side of the rail, where the light-print box was mounted.

"Oh, no," muttered Mira's uncle, as one of the officials leaned over to set up a tripod stand inside the rails. He adjusted it and a huge horse-tail of fine feathery filaments blossomed out and eddied through the center of the space.

"Oh no," Laban said again. "Why can't they let it be?"

"They're trying to pick up dust from his suit, is that right?" Serli asked.

"Yes, insane. Did you get time to read?"

"Oh yes," said Serli.

"Sort of," added Mira.

"Then you know. He's falling. Trying to check his—well, call it velocity. Trying to slow down. He must have slipped or stumbled. We're getting pretty close to when he lost his footing



and started to fall. What did it? Did somebody trip him?" Laban looked from Mira to Serli, dead serious now. "How would you like to be the one who made John Delgano fall?"

"Ooh," said Mira in quick sympathy. Then she said, "Oh."

"You mean," asked Serli, "Whoever made him fall caused all the, caused—"

"Possible," said Laban.

"Wait a minute." Serli frowned. "He did fall. So somebody had to do it—I mean, he has to trip or whatever. If he doesn't fall the past would all be changed, wouldn't it? No war, no—"

"Possible," Laban repeated. "God knows. All I know is that John Delgano and the space around him is the most unstable, improbable, highly charged area ever known on earth and I'm damned if I think anybody should go poking sticks in it."

"Oh come now, Laban!" One of the Alberta men joined them, smiling. "Our dust-mop couldn't trip a gnat. It's just vitreous monofilaments."

"Dust from the future," grumbled Laban. "What's it going to tell you? That the future has dust in it?"

"If we could only get a trace from that thing in his hand."

"In his hand?" asked Mira. Serli started leafing hurriedly through the pamphlet.

"We've had a recording analyser aimed at it," the Albertan lowered his voice, glancing around. "A spectroscope. We know there's something there, or was. Can't get a decent reading. It's severely deteriorated."

"People poking at him, grabbing at him," Laban muttered. "You—"

"Ten minutes!" shouted a man with

a megaphone. "Take your places, friends and strangers."

The Repentance people were filing in at one side, intoning in chorus, "Mer-cy, Mer-cy."

The atmosphere suddenly took on tension. It was now very close and hot in the big tent. A boy from the Mayor's office wiggled through the crowd, beckoning Laban's party to come and sit in the guest chairs on the second level on the "face" side. In front of them at the rail one of the Repentance ministers was arguing with an Albertan official over his right to occupy the space taken by a recorder, it being his special duty to look into the Man John's eyes.

"Can he really see us?" Mira asked her uncle.

"Blink your eyes," Laban told her. "A new scene every blink, that's what he sees. A phantasmagoria. Blink-blink-blink—for god knows how long."

"Mer-cy, Mer-er-cy!" intoned the Repentancites. "May the red of sin pa-aa-ass from us!" neighed a woman's voice.

"They believe his oxygen tab went red because of the state of their souls," Laban chuckled. "Their souls are going to have to stay damned awhile; John Delgano has been on oxygen reserve for five centuries—or rather, he *will be* low for five centuries more. At a half-second per year his time, that's fifteen minutes. We know from the audio trace he's still breathing more or less normally and the reserve was good for twenty minutes. So they should have their salvation about the year seven hundred, if they last that long."

"Five minutes! Take your seats, folks."

Please sit down so everyone can see. Sit down, folks."

"It says we'll hear his voice through his suit speaker," Serli whispered. "Do you know what he's saying?"

"You get mostly a twenty-cycle howl," Laban hissed back. "The recorders have spliced up something like *"ayt,"* part of an old word. Take centuries to get enough to translate."

"Is it a message?"

"Who knows? Could be his word for 'date' or 'hate.' 'Too late,' maybe. Anything."

The tent was quieting. A fat child by the railing started to cry and was pulled back onto a lap. There was a subdued mumble of praying. The Resurrection faction on the far side rustled their flowers.

"Why don't we set our clocks by him?"

"It's changing. He's on sidereal time."

*"One minute."*

In the hush the praying voices rose slightly. From outside a chicken cackled. The bare center space looked absolutely ordinary. Over it the recorder's silvery filaments eddied gently in the breath from a hundred lungs. Another recorder could be heard ticking faintly.

For long seconds nothing happened.

The air developed a tiny hum. At the same moment Mira caught a movement at the railing on her left.

The hum developed a beat and vanished into a peculiar silence and suddenly everything happened at once.

Sound burst on them, raced shockingly up the audible scale. The air cracked as something rolled and tum-

bled in the space. There was a grinding, wailing roar and—

*He was there.*

Solid, huge—a huge man in a monster suit, his head only a dull bronze transparent globe. Behind it a human face, dark smear of open mouth. His position was impossible, legs strained forward thrusting himself back, his arms frozen in a whirlwind swing. Although he seemed to be in frantic forward motion nothing moved, only one of his legs buckled or sagged slightly—

—And then he was gone, utterly and completely gone in a thunderclap, leaving only the incredible after-image in a hundred pairs of staring eyes. Air boomed, shuddering; dust roiled out mixed with smoke.

"Oh, Oh my God," grasped Mira, unheard, clinging to Serli. Voices were crying out, choking. "He saw me, he saw me!" a woman shrieked. A few people dazedly threw their confetti into the empty dust-cloud; most had failed to throw at all. Children began to howl. "He saw me!" the woman screamed hysterically. "Red, Oh Lord have mercy!" a deep male voice intoned.

Mira heard Laban swearing furiously and looked again into the space. As the dust settled she could see that the recorder's tripod had tipped over into the center. There was a dusty mound lying against it—flowers. Most of the end of the stand seemed to have disappeared or been melted. Of the filaments nothing could be seen.

"Some damn fool pitched flowers into it. Come on, let's get out."

"Was it under, did it trip him?" asked Mira, squeezed in the crowd.

"It was still red, his oxygen thing,"

Serli said over her head. "No mercy this trip, eh, Laban?"

"Shsh!" Mira caught the Repentance pastor's dark glance. They jostled through the enclosure gate and were out in the sunlit park, voices exclaiming, chattering loudly in excitement and relief.

"It was terrible," Mira cried softly. "Oh, I never thought it was a real live man. There he is, he's *there*. Why can't we help him? Did we trip him?"

"I don't know, I don't think so," her uncle grunted. They sat down near the new monument, fanning themselves. The curtain was still in place.

"Did we change the past?" Serli laughed, looked lovingly at his little wife, wondering for a moment why she was wearing such odd earrings. Then he remembered he had given them to her at that Indian pueblo they'd passed.

"But it wasn't just those Alberta people," said Mira. She seemed obsessed with the idea. "It was the flowers really." She wiped at her forehead.

"Mechanics or superstition," chuckled Serli. "Which is the culprit, love or science?"

"Shsh," said Mira gain. "The flowers were love, I guess . . . I feel so strange. It's hot. Oh, thank you." Uncle Laban had succeeded in attracting the attention of the iced-drink vendor.

People were chatting normally now and the choir struck into a cheerful song. At one side of the park a line of people were waiting to sign their names in the visitors' book. The mayor appeared at the park gate, leading a party up the bougainvillea alley for the unveiling of the monument.

"What did it say on that stone?"

Mira asked. Serli showed her the guidebook picture of Carl's rock with the inscription translated below: WELCOME HOME JOHN.

"I wonder if he can see it."

The mayor was about to begin his speech.

Much later when the crowd had gone away the monument stood alone in the dark, displaying to the moon the inscription in the language of that time and place:

ON THIS SPOT THERE APPEARS ANNUALLY THE FORM OF MAJOR JOHN DELGANO, THE FIRST AND ONLY MAN TO TRAVEL IN TIME.

MAJOR DELGANO WAS SENT INTO THE FUTURE SOME HOURS BEFORE THE HOLOCAUST OF DAY ZERO. ALL KNOWLEDGE OF THE MEANS BY WHICH HE WAS SENT IS LOST, PERHAPS FOREVER. IT IS BELIEVED THAT AN ACCIDENT OCCURRED WHICH SENT HIM MUCH FARTHER THAN WAS INTENDED. SOME ANALYSTS SPECULATE THAT HE MAY HAVE GONE AS FAR AS FIFTY THOUSAND YEARS. HAVING REACHED THIS UNKNOWN POINT MAJOR DELGANO APPARENTLY WAS RECALLED, OR ATTEMPTED TO RETURN, ALONG THE COURSE IN SPACE AND TIME THROUGH WHICH HE WAS SENT. HIS TRAJECTORY IS THOUGHT TO START AT THE POINT WHICH OUR SOLAR SYSTEM WILL OCCUPY AT A FUTURE TIME AND IS TANGENT TO THE COMPLEX HELIX WHICH OUR EARTH DESCRIBES AROUND THE SUN.

HE APPEARS ON THIS SPOT IN THE ANNUAL INSTANTS IN WHICH HIS COURSE INTERSECTS OUR PLANET'S ORBIT AND HE IS APPARENTLY ABLE TO

TOUCH THE GROUND IN THOSE INSTANTS. SINCE NO TRACE OF HIS PASSAGE INTO THE FUTURE HAS BEEN MANIFESTED, IT IS BELIEVED THAT HE IS RETURNING BY A DIFFERENT MEANS THAN HE WENT FORWARD. HE IS ALIVE IN OUR PRESENT. OUR PAST IS HIS FUTURE AND OUR FUTURE IS HIS PAST. THE TIME OF HIS APPEARANCES IS SHIFTING GRADUALLY IN SOLAR TIME TO CONVERGE ON THE MOMENT OF 1155.6, THE SECOND OF MAY 1989 OLD STYLE, OR DAY ZERO. THE EXPLOSION WHICH ACCOMPANIED HIS RETURN TO HIS OWN TIME AND PLACE MAY HAVE OCCURRED WHEN SOME ELEMENTS OF THE PAST INSTANTS OF HIS COURSE WERE CARRIED WITH HIM INTO THEIR OWN PRIOR EXISTENCE. IT IS CERTAIN THAT THIS EXPLOSION PRECIPITATED THE HOLOCAUST WHICH ENDED FOREVER THE AGE OF HARD-SCIENCE.

*—He was falling, losing control, failing in his fight against the terrible momentum he had gained, fighting with his human legs shaking in the inhuman stiffness of his armour, his soles charred, not gripping well now, not enough traction to brake, battling, thrusting as the flashes came, the punishing alternation of light, dark, light, dark, which he had borne so long, the claps of air thickening and thinning against his armour as he skidded through space which was time, desperately braking as the flickers of earth hammered against his feet—only his feet mattered now, only to slow and stay on course—and the course, the beam was getting slacker; as he came near home it was fanning out, hard to stay centered; he was becoming, he supposed, more probable; the wound he had punched was healing itself. In the be-*

*ginning it had been so tight, a single ray, a beacon in a closing tunnel—he had hurled himself after it like an electron flying to the anode, aimed surely along that exquisitely complex single vector of possibility of life, shot and been shot like a squeezed pip into the last chink in that rejecting and rejected nowhere through which he, John Delgano, could conceivably continue to exist, the hole leading to home—had pounded down it across time, across space, pumping with his human legs as the real earth of that unreal time came under him, his course as certain as the twisting dash of an animal down its burrow, he a cosmic mouse on an interstellar, intertemporal race for his nest with the wrongness of everything closing round the rightness of that one course, the atoms of his heart, his blood, his every cell crying Home—Home!—as he drove himself after that fading breath-hole, each step faster, surer, stronger, until he raced with invincible momentum upon the rolling flickers of earth as a man might race a rolling log in a torrent! Only the stars stayed constant around him from flash to flash, he looking down past his feet at a million strobes of Crux, of Triangulum; once at the height of his stride he had risked a century's glance upward and seen the Bears weirdly strung out from Polaris—But a Polaris not the Pole Star now, he realised, jerking his eyes back to his racing feet, thinking, I am walking home to Polaris, home! to the strobing beat. He had ceased to remember where he had been, the beings, people or aliens or things he had glimpsed in the impossible moment of being where he could not be;*

(Continued on page 130)

# ***SOFT CHANGE***

## ***GORDON EKLUND***

*Gordon Eklund's "Beyond the Resurrection" is currently being serialized in FANTASTIC (April and June issues), but here's something a little shorter but no less strange and compelling and uniquely Eklund . . .*

***Illustrated by STEVE HARPER***

**T**HERE IS A SCHEME to things.

Looking upon the wondrous order of an infinite universe, one can never doubt this statement. *Oh, yes, certainly, I can see it with my own eyes. There is a scheme to things.*

And so there is. But what is it?

It is evolution. But, no, it is more than that. It is a people (in this particular instance, it is a people), and it is a lush and green world called Krystan.

It all began many millions of years ago, when the human race was but a gleam on a trilobite's shell (no, it was even long before that); it began with a people.

A proud, green-skinned race with three arms and four legs who lived on the world Krystan. Like most everything, they'd begun small and slowly evolved through millions of years to reach their present status. They were a technological society, unlike most societies, and they bridged the gaps that separated the seven planets of their own system. Soon they began looking

outward toward the stars that surrounded them. They were asked: Why do you want to go out there? It is very dark out there and very lonely. Sometimes they answered, but most often they did not.

They didn't know. They really didn't know why they wanted to go out there. But there was a reason. There is a scheme to things, and there is an answer to all questions, a reason for all actions.

Because of this, when they arrived out there, when they conquered and controlled a section of the galaxy, when they met other races, and sometimes fought them, because of this grand scheme, they soon decided to return home.

It took centuries, many centuries, but eventually the Krystanians arrived back at their home world. There were billions upon billions of them by this time, and they covered every square inch of land space and many of them even toppled into the sea. The Krystanians

had returned to Krystan and there they waited.

And as they waited, they matured; they discovered that they were a part of their planet. Now, a tree sits in the earth, and it never doubts for a moment that it is a part of that earth; not a man. Because he walks, because he moves, he thinks he is only *on* the earth, that he is apart and alone from his environment.

But not the mature Krystanians. Oh, no, not them. They learned better.

And as more years passed, the Krystanians matured so fully that they ceased entirely being on their world and became forever a part of it. They were Krystan, and it was they, and everything was one.

This is called maturity.

And the planet continued to spin around its sun, and the sun grew smaller and cooler, and the planet grew closer in order to draw from the sun its flickering warmth.

But the planet was calm, and it was satisfied. It knew that when the sun lost its last energy, something else would happen to it.

For there is, you see, a scheme to things. But often it is a very difficult thing to see. Very, very difficult indeed.

**AND** MAVIQUE SITS in space, in her cruiser, which has set her back her life savings, plus those of her husband, and she is thinking: *It's down down down there. The end of my dream. Down there.* And she is a happy woman, if only a little sad, for it is the end of her dream, and it sits down there looking up at her like a bejeweled altar with eyes.



To herself, she whispers, "Krystan," and her voice is soft, like a fragile hymn, and she is worn. She has seen the galaxy, and it has tired her, and now she has come to be alone.

The world which lies below her (or not below her—above—to the side) is blue, green, crisply brown. "It's much like Earth," she tells herself, though she's never seen Earth, only heard tales of its mythical blues, greens, and browns. "And I'm Eve," she says, looking down upon herself, then out at the world. "And, yes, I'm Eve. But, Adam, where are you?"

But such a thought depresses her; so she changes her thought, putting a new reel on the recorder, and instead says aloud, "I am alone."

Her fingers move quickly, long and slim, like those of a musician or a doctor, though Mavique is neither, only a woman. The cruiser glides into the atmosphere of the planet, and it spins, and it drops, and the ground rushes upward.

Here I come, Mavique thinks. Ah, here I come.

And when she lands, she sits in her thick leather chair, and folds her hands in her lap, and looks out, thinking, *It's safe out there, Mavique, don't be a damned fool.* But she's afraid, and she's alone, and now she wants only to look.

It's green out there. Trees, grand trees, so tall as to make the skyscrapers of Meridian seem puny in comparison. And they're so damned green, Mavique thinks. And that earth is so brown. It's sharp, she sees; there's no spot where green mingles with brown or brown with green. They do not mingle. They are sharp and distinct, like squares on a chessboard, though they are not

square, but spherical.

Mavique just sits there, now thinking: Antone, Antone, don't you wish you were here? How much we could've done, Antone. It's a green paradise, a lush world, untouched, and it could have been ours.

Aloud, she says, "I declare I better get out of here. I declare I better do it now."

But she does not move, only sits in the chair, watching the green and the blue, watching her new world. It has a diameter of 9,000 miles, and over forty per cent of its surface area is good clean land.

And I'm the only one here, she thinks. The only one who's ever been here. And her eyes track to the cloudless sky, and she sees the red disc of the sun alone in the orange sky, like an eye without a face. "And didn't you have fun last night," she tells the sun.

And laughs at her own joke, fingers in her lap, twitching, twitching. Fingers curling around one another, and feet tapping the floor, and thinking, *I am here all alone. Goddamn—but I'm scared.*

AND NOW SHE has accomplished her tasks, and she is not so very alone, though she still wishes for Antone and the long-legs-slim and the short-arms-thick and the tiny little feet pressed inside the tight brown sandals.

The clearing is not large, but there is a prefabricated hut, very modern, and utensils for quick cooking, and a lavatory, and many other sane gadgets from a modern world. It's a cultivated spot, as cultivated as her little home on Meridian, missing only Ravel, her husband, and the three small boys



whom she calls children.

Her legs are crossed beneath her, and she wears a jump suit, which keeps the cold of evening off her body, and her arms are crossed around her chest, and her ears are alert, listening. There are small animals outside her circle of civilization, and she hears them chirp and whistle, and cry. *Animals*, she's thinking, *aren't they a joy*. On Meridian, there aren't any. But the thought of animals brings with it the emotion of fear. The fear is caused by the strangeness, and the strangeness is increased by the fear. Suddenly, she is running, her bootheels digging into the calm earth, and she reaches the cruiser, and scampers inside. Then, sitting on the grim metallic floor, she peers out a porthole and sees nothing but the calmness of her home.

There's nothing wrong here, she tells herself. I'm safe. I've brought my civilization with me. I'm a pioneer, and a pioneer must not be afraid.

She removes the book from a desk and opens it on her lap, and puts her chin in her palm, and presses her lips together. *Which one should I read tonight? My first night here*, and without hesitation she turns to the very beginning, the Book of Genesis, and reads of birth and creation.

When she is done, and it is late, and she is tired, she drops the book and lifts her chin from her palm. *I'm Eve*, she says to herself, not quite aloud, *but who is Adam? Antone, Antone, why did you stay?*

Then she sleeps, in the cruiser this first night, still fearing. Outside in Eden, an artificial light glows, and animals make sounds, chirping and whistling. In the far distance, perhaps

clear to the snow-capped mountains, a large animal howls. But Mavique, asleep, does not hear. Her dreaming is private, but soft.

**"I WANT MEAT,"** she tells herself, speaking in a voice that is clear and distinct. She has occupied this world for ten days now, and spends less time thinking, more time speaking. She has explored the land for miles around. It is a wooded area, with infrequent patches of turned earth which look almost as though they had once been cultivated. But mostly it is trees, the great evergreens that surround her Eden, and a few small red ones that give off a white milky substance that is sweet on the tongue. "I want meat," she says. "I have eaten concentrates for ten days, and my stomach is sick."

She removes the weapon from the cruiser. It has a needlepoint barrel and fires a nerve-gas that kills instantly on impact. Following instructions, she first inoculates herself, in case of accidental exposure, then prowls the wood. The day here lasts thirty-six hours, and it is now mid-morning, the red sun suffusing through a single cloud. She has carried the weapon on all her excursions, and though she has seen many animals, they have never moved to harm her. They are not frightened, she tells herself, for they have never seen a man before. And again, she wonders: Why is the world untouched when the whole galaxy is filled with human footprints?

She remembers when Antone showed her the charts. It is here, right here, we can reach it in less than a week, and nobody has ever been near it before. (Antone speaking in her

breathless ever-so-feminine tones). And we can finally be alone together, my darling. Just us. Alone together.

And Antone, later, saying no, I can't make it, things have come up, and Mavique thinking: I hate you, hate you, hate you, you have promised me.

And now she is alone, looking for something to kill.

She walks for hours, and it is warm, and she sheds her jumpsuit, padding through the brush on naked feet. Her belly is lined with the births of three children, and her legs are fat in the calf but thin in the thigh. Her breasts are languid sacks; her eyes deep and lined. Only thirty-three years old, she thinks, enough time to start anew. Alone.

And she finds the animal. In a clearing. Surrounded by the broken stumps of the red trees. The animal is the size of a small dog, with the soft trim fur of a cat and the eyes and nose of a rodent. Its teeth are sharp and its eyes are yellow. It is fat and plump.

The animal stands rooted to its spot, watching her. She raises the weapon, squinting along the barrel, and presses the trigger.

She hears a sound, a long whistling sigh, but that is all.

Then her belly is afire. The pain is immense, unbearable, and she is screaming, crying, and her body is rolling on the ground, and she is screaming, crying. She tries to form words, but her tongue trips on her teeth, and she knows she can never speak again.

Her eyes are shut, and she knows her body is dying, dead, though she herself is not. Something is reaching down, grabbing her fur, and lifting her

body. She can neither see nor hear, but she can feel something, and it is saying *The creature is fat; it will make a fine meal.*

*I am fat*, she thinks, *I am a fine meal*, but thinking is difficult, as if her brain is unprepared for it, so she stops.

She is being carried beneath the sun, and its warm rays soothe her body. She feels memories of mating and feels a not-feeling of fat insects and gray four-legged creatures and much, much else. She wants to howl, but cannot, for she is dead.

*Don't eat me*, she wants to say. *Don't you know it is me*, and she is dropped to the ground, and hours seem to pass like days as she tries to think, scream, shout, speak, moan, howl. Fear is not an emotion, but a smell, both rancid and sweet.

There is dirt in her mouth, but she cannot taste it, and suddenly there is a knife in her side, and her skin is removed, and her flesh is exposed, and this time, yes, this time she screams and—

She is looking down at the skinned animal that lies in her hand, and it is fat, and plump, and fleshy. She stands there for a long moment, just looking at the thing, and then dropping it, she runs. When she reaches the sanctuary of the cruiser, she stops, and dropping to the floor, she screams. Many minutes pass, then she stops screaming and starts to cry. She laughs.

“**W**HAT A STRANGE reaction,” Mavique says to herself, looking down at the skinned hulk of the animal. “I must be more opposed to this kind of thing than I'd thought.”

But she does not eat the animal. She leaves it in the sun, and goes back to her concentrates. *What a strange reaction. I thought I was that thing.* But she knows she cannot remember walking back to the camp, cannot remember skinning the animal (only being carried, being skinned), so she does not eat it. She sets it in the sun, where it sits for three days and does not rot.

Eventually, at dusk, she carries the animal into the wood and places it beneath a tree. It ought to rot, she thinks, it really ought to. And she remembers something about bacteria and says to herself, *Then I don't have to worry about getting sick.* And naked—she is always naked now, black hair on her arms and legs—she returns to the camp and crawls beneath a blanket. The blanket engulfs her, and she rests, while quietly thinking: *I was that animal. I was. What a strange reaction. Almost ate myself. I was.*

**T**HE CONCENTRATES are so bland and her tongue seems so dead they have no taste, though containing all the important nutrients, and again she thinks *I need meat.*

*But not the muskrat,* she thinks (she calls the animal a muskrat, though it bears only faint resemblance to the mythical Earth creature), *I will kill something else.*

*And I'm so damned lonely,* she thinks. *I sealed my doom the moment I left the house, sneaking out of bed, while my husband slept in the next room.* It was very quiet that night. The usual mad flow of traffic had eased, and she crept out of bed on tiptoes and then, reaching the door, she ran.

Nothing stopped her of course (she was already alone), and she got in the car, and it drove her to the port. When she was ten miles away, she looked at the sky and saw the flashes of light, yellow and bright, a shuttle to here and a shuttle to there.

She had to walk the line, and as she moved, she felt a thousand pairs of eyes peering past and into her own. They know what I'm doing, she thought. Left my husband of thirteen years and my children aged twelve, nine, and seven. About to fly away, into the sky, with a friend and a lover.

She was safely aboard the cruiser, which she and Antone had together decided to name *Altair*, and she was alone, and waiting, tapping her fingers against her knee, wondering . . .

Then came the phone call, and in the screen Antone's ever-so-sophisticated face, with its pale white ridges and tight pursed lips and black arching brows.

"Why are you late?" she asked.

And Antone said, "I've decided I can't go. It's not worth it."

"Worth what?" Mavique said. "What isn't worth what?"

"Going away like this. I've got too much at stake to risk—just can't go."

"But—"

"Maybe later I can take a vacation."

"Vacation?" *But I thought you said we'd be gone forever, just the two of us, alone together on a quarantined world, which isn't dangerous, and where nobody—no man—can ever touch us.*

"I'm sorry I waited till now. But I couldn't be sure." Then, sighing, "Call me tomorrow."

*But I left anyway,* Mavique thinks. *I really fooled her and left anyway.* She

is prowling the forest, without the gun, not looking for meat, just walking. *Anyone can be pushed so far and then they can't stop. I couldn't stop, and now I'm here.*

*And I'm so damned alone.*

The dirt at her feet is red, not the reddish-brown of clean ancient earth, but the bright crimson of fresh blood. Mavique stops and sits on the ground, drawing her knees to her chin. The earth is warm against her buttocks and the sun hot against her unshaded head. I need a friend, she thinks, or I'll never stick it out. I'll run, that's what I'll do, I'll run.

She doesn't see the muskrat until a few seconds later. It creeps into the clearing and stops, wrapping its tail beneath it. The animal seems to watch her, and she in turn watches it, thinking, *I wish I were you. So calm and happy, without problems or worries.*

And—

For the first time in many weeks, her belly is full. It has the fullness of an after dinner nap, but it is filled not with meat or concentrates, but with fat black insects, and rich stream water, and long green worms. All of this digested as she creeps through the wood. The trees are immensely tall, hovering above her, but she sees only flashes of brown and flashes of green.

At one patch of brown, she stops and raises her forepaws, sharpening the nails against the heavy bark of the tree. Her-eyes dart carefully behind her at all moments, insuring that danger does not lurk. There is a continuous fear, which is an odor, and it is a fear of a great brown thing that rushes in with slashing teeth and crashing jaws.

Then she is off, and time seems to be not moving at all, for it does not matter. She pauses to drink at a stream, and washes her hands and feet, and she curls beneath a tree and sleeps, her eyes opening at each rustle of leaves and wind.

The she is off again, and time still seems motionless, irrelevant. There is a dark burrow, and she is pawing at the ground, digging black bugs out of the earth and consuming them.

Inside her, there is conflict, one saying *I must seek* and the other rejecting. The conflict is like a pain, and as night begins to fall, and fear begins to grow, the pain worsens. She howls suddenly, at the back of her burrow, three feet below ground, dark twigs and leaves providing camouflage. She howls suddenly.

And she is cold, alone in the clearing, still sitting. She is hungrier now that she's ever been in her life.

*I must've been out a whole day,* she thinks, as she races toward the distant glow of the cruiser. *Out for a whole day, I was a muskrat.* And she thinks: *It was fun, peaceful, because the loneliness left me. Animals are never lonely.*

*There's something about this place,* she thinks, but never one to question fate, believing in God as she does, she eats the concentrates. *I don't even know if I'm tired,* she thinks, but she drops to the ground and sleeps. *A strange land here I have found, does the devil hide in dark burrows?*

But Mavique does not believe in a devil, only in the two faces of god, one black and evil, the other white and pure, and they are always as one, together, combined, shifting.

AND SOON IT BECOMES a game she plays, straying far from the camp, often failing to return for several days. She romps and plays in field and wood, learns to communicate with other muskrats by the use of short, guttural sounds. She learns their mating system, brief but passionate. She learns to eat insects and worms. She learns to play her animalistic role. And when she's a muskrat, she does not think, for animals do not have the need for concentrated thought. They think instead in tones of color, sound, smell, and taste. They think in terms of fear and thirst and hunger.

She learns to control the power and learns not to question it. *This is an alien world, she thinks, and not mine to question. It is God in his infinite wisdom who has shown me the way.*

But she cannot always be a muskrat, for her body continues to demand nourishment. Her legs are thick and muscular now, her body strong and heavy. She seems to gain strength by becoming something else, and it does her no harm.

But still she must tend her campfires, and still she must control her life. And when she does, she is forced to think, and when she thinks, she is lonely, and when she is lonely, she is candid.

*If I hadn't found God on this world, I would have left long ago. I came here to escape my people, but now I find I cannot live alone.*

And one night, as she sits across from a stark artificial flame, she is thinking, *Antone, Antone, why can't I be you and you be me? Why do I have to be a muskrat?* (for the game, as fun as it

is, has paled). *Why do I always have to be something else?*

It is very cold, for it is late, but the fire is warm, and she runs her hands, stroking, along her body while thinking all the time.

It is loneliness, she knows. Fourteen light years from home (not a long distance, really, and she remembers when, on her honeymoon, Ravel took her across half the galaxy to the planet Vacusian, a marvelous living museum, where he explored ancient texts while she lay on the beach, waiting).

"And I'm so alone," she says aloud. "So alone and I can't stand it."

And, making a decision, slowly, the impulses of her brain refusing to click, rusted by deprivation, she stands. "I am going to the ship," she says, and she does, the great metallic vehicle that has loomed above her for many weeks and which she has not entered for three. *I am going to do it.*

She has trouble recalling what is what in the control room, though less than three months earlier she guided the craft through interstellar space. Her mind releases a memory of a long and difficult lesson in logistics and operation, she in one simulator, Antone in the other, giggling at each other through the glass. And the trip was more difficult than she'd expected, what with doing alone what had been planned for two.

But she finds the radio/communicator at last, and she touches the proper buttons, twists the correct levers. *I'll make them put her through, she thinks. I'll tell them my desperation.*

But before completing the call, she first pauses, running the risks through

her mind, as slowly they come to her. I am alone on a quarantined world. I will have to state my position. They will come after me.

And that, she decides, is that. Let them come. I can't stand this loneliness, racing past tall trees, my muskrat smell and my muskrat fear. I cannot take it at all.

So she places the call.

And—

*That's funny.*

She re-presses the proper buttons and re-twists the correct dials, but there is nothing, not even a humming noise or a trace of static. There is nothing.

*It's as if I'm totally alone,* she thinks. Absolutely.

And there is that moment of total fear when a woman thinks that perhaps the universe is an illusion and now that she has left all see-touch-hear-smell-taste she is truly alone.

"But I have my God," she whispers.

And then she screams, slamming her fists against the communicator, *speak to me somehow*, she screams, *oh please speak to me I'm so lonely*.

The universe smiles silently.

She flees the crusier, tripping, falling, as she misses the top step. And her knee bleeds with the dark blood of an abrasion, and she stands, running limping, hurtling into the wood.

Then stops.

Then screams.

Then slams her fist into her mouth.

*It's broken,* she tells herself. *That's all. Perhaps it never worked.*

*Blame it on a mechanical error, Mavique, go ahead, but you know the truth, don't you?*

"I know the truth," she says.

*You're alone, aren't you?*

"Oh yes yes so alone."

*No, you're not alone.*

Although she is outside the line of the fire, although there is no moon, it having disappeared long ago, and the stars are far away, she sees the face clearly. It is the face of a cultivated woman, with all the bones sharp, so that the cheeks and the jaw are white ridges, and the lips are thin wet spots, and the eyes are brown and narrow. The woman's hair is short and yellow, and she is cleanly dressed in sharp contrast to the fat and frowzy Mavique.

"You look like an animal," says Antone.

"I—"

"And you sputter like a small child. What I made of you, bitch, taking you under my wing, nothing but a frowzy housewife, took you under my wing, married to a man who'd rather fondle a book than love a woman, took you under my wing, and you left goddamn you me."

"Antone." She takes a single step forward, her black foot tickling the earth. "I tried to call you."

"I put ideas in your head (didn't I?), and you took them seriously (didn't you?), and you left. Thought I'd come with you, living in hell, black and hairy like a muskrat."

"But, Antone, this is—"

"Yes?" An eyebrow rises one cultivated fraction of an inch.

"This is Eden."

"Oh?" She shrugs. "Then perhaps I'm the serpent."

**I'M STRONGER** than that, Mavique thinks. This many hours later, after

sitting in the warm sun, dirt tickling her naked thighs, some kind of very small, very energetic insect running across her belly, first this way, then that. *I'm stronger than that.* Strength can come with aloneness, for weakness is compounded of many defeats, and when one is alone, one is never defeated. *Yes, I'm stronger than that.*

So, climbing unsteadily to her feet, her knees stiff after many hours of kneeling, she closes her eyes, and opens her mind, and Antone appears.

A few feet away. In the dust. So close as to be touchable, and Mavique taunts her with words, tosses dust at her face.

"You made me come here," she says.

"You made me, and I'm so alone."

At first Antone merely smiles back, the dirt running down her face, the dust seeping into her eyes and hair, but finally she falls to her knees, rolls on the ground, and Mavique sees that she is crying. Stepping to her side, holding her hands, Mavique smells her sorrow.

"Why?" asks Mavique.

"Because," says Antone, "I've lost everything."

"But," Mavique says, "you never had anything to lose."

"That's why," Antone says. "That's why."

With a sigh, Mavique releases her, the figment departs, and she goes to the cruiser, sits at the control board.

*I'm leaving here, she thinks. I've had enough, played too many games, defeated too many figments.* But the true reason, she knows, is that she must return to Antone, must explain her actions. *I'm still in love, she thinks. But I have to know the meaning of the figments.*

But she's forgotten how. No matter what she does the ship remains on the ground, refuses to rise into the sky. A fear says: *I'm holding you here, never going to let you go,* but Mavique tries not to listen.

The lessons were so complete, just she and Antone alone, and the instructor, who tried not to watch them, knowing partially what was happening, wondering banefully of the rest.

But the ship will not move.

No matter that she correctly presses and pulls the multitude of buttons and levers. She tries for hours, many hours.

The ship does not move.

She crawls beneath the control panel. It is cold, dark, damp. Her eyes close slowly. She sleeps.

WITHIN A WEEK, Mavique has grown tired of Antone, calling her up, taunting her, making her cry and grovel, then telling her of her concern and talking as they'd always talked before. It has become a bore, and she no longer cares that the ship will not move.

She wakes beneath a green tree and blinks her eyes, staring upward. She no longer stays at the camp now. She's forgotten its location, only stumbles upon it accidentally, and when she does, she has to think—what is this monstrous metallic hulk?—and sometimes the answer comes immediately, and sometimes it does not come for many hours, and often it does not come at all.

She wakes now beneath a green tree and blinks her eyes many times. Getting slowly to her feet, she yawns.

She knows she's been asleep, but does not know how or when. She falls



asleep, automatically now, doing it whenever it is impossible to continue. And sometimes she will sleep and not know when or where she lost consciousness. And sometimes she will be on her feet, moving, and not remember how or why she woke.

She has long since stopped eating. At first it hurt, and she ate because she knew she must eat to live, but some days ago, she realized this was no longer true, and she stopped eating, and it has made no difference.

She thinks: *Somedays I walk alone and somedays I do not but today I shall walk alone.* Antone has accompanied her, like a spirit, and they have talked and fought, laughed and hated. *But I'm beyond that now,* Mavique thinks. *I am bored.*

She starts to walk. There is no direction in her mind, only an unawareness, and if she sees an insect, she may become that insect, or if she sees a muskrat or a tiger (a huge four-legged carnivore), she may become that muskrat or that tiger. But sometimes she only walks until she falls asleep on her feet. It does not seem to make any difference.

There is a wind today (she is crossing a shallow brook, letting the grime slide from her feet), and she cannot remember a wind. It rustles the leaves high in the trees and seems to make them whisper. *The trees speak to me,* Mavique thinks, but it does not make any difference.

Today the four are waiting on the opposite bank of the brook, but Mavique passes without recognition. A man, a tall man, with shallow cheeks and thin eyes, whose lips appear closed and

sealed, and three children whose only difference lies in their height and depth. Mavique passes them, without recognition, though they are her children.

*Speak to your family,* says a voice, but Mavique does not listen. The voice has told her that all rests within one's self, that she need only let go and relax, but she prefers to wander senselessly, for that is all that is left her.

The four begin following, and the children are speaking, but she is not listening. They follow closely at her bare heels, which are white now, turning slowly brown, and she walks quickly, then slows, faster, then slowly. She is not thinking, she has stopped long ago, and she is not thinking, though she now crosses an area of rocks, and the stones cut her feet, turning them red. But there is no need to worry; once she knew she couldn't get sick, but that too has now been forgotten.

The trees whisper, when she returns to the forest, and the four have fallen behind, stopping at the edge of the rocks, calling to her with voices like ice. The trees whisper appealingly, and eventually Mavique falls, asleep, alone as always, knowing the time has come to go further, take the next step, knowing she will never wake.

—stoic.

—unmoving.

Her arms are branches, covered with bark and leaves, and the wind whistles past them. Time passes and cones appear, fall, and she does not think, for a tree never thinks.

But she is aware. Aware of the passing of the seasons, aware of the moving

of the world. It draws closer to the red sun and saps its remaining warmth.

Animals come to her, sharpening their claws upon her outer shell, but it does not hurt, because she cannot feel. Rain falls from the sky, and much of it is caught by her hands, and she feeds upon it, but again she does not care, for she cannot feel.

At night the sun leaves the sky and her arms draw closer to her chest, feeding upon the remaining warmth, but again it does not harm her, for she cannot feel.

Other trees surround her, some much larger and stronger than she, but this does not bother her either. She cannot feel, and thus cannot fear.

Mavique is a tree.

Or, is the tree Mavique?

No matter.

THE YEARS PASS.

AWARENESS COMES PAINFULLY after so much notfeeling, and she can hardly stand it. The voice comes like a shout, though it's barely a whisper, and stings her ears.

*But I have no ears, she thinks.*

The voice is the voice of Krystan, and it tells her the moment has come for the last step, the filtering, to become as one with the world and

NO NO I'M SO ALONE

*became one with the people. Many have come before you, Mavique, the curious, the adventuresome, the bold. They came to discover, to conquer, to win, and each was sent away, back to his own world, but not in his own time, so that*

SET ME FREE RETURN ME OH PLEASE

*he had no remembrance of ever having come here. But you, Mavique, you were different, you had the maturity not to come in search of victory, but only to be alone, so we gave you the power and allowed you to be, until*

BUT I DONT WANT IT

*you became a tree and learned that*

I LEARNED NOTHING

*acceptance of maturity, true maturity*

I WANT TO GO BACK

*is the way to*

HOME

*peace.*

I AM

*you are.*

AND WHEN SHE AWAKENS, she sits in the clearing and the cruiser is but a few yards away. It is raining and her hair is damp and thick with dew, and quickly she runs inside. It is warm in the cruiser, and she pauses on the couch.

There is nothing she wants to remember, so she stares out the window and watches the rain. Already it is easing, and soon it will stop.

She readies the ship for departure and moves to the control panel. All is prepared, and only a single button remains to be pressed.

*I have failed, she thinks.* But she cannot recall how she has failed or what she has failed. There is a feeling that seems to tell her that success can exist within failure, but it sounds too much like a lesson, so she touches the button.

The cruiser rises, not like a rocket blazing through the sky, but softly, like a feather, moving into the rain, then above the rain, then into the clouds

and above them. Blue becomes red, red becomes black, and she sits in space, staring down (or up, to-the-side) at the world, Krystan.

And she sees the wheel. It is like an ancient nickelodeon, forerunner of the motion picture projector, which spins a series of photographs so rapidly that they take on the appearance of motion.

But these pictures are all different, unrelated, and they fade into one before her eyes, in space, floating.

There is a man, her husband, Ravel, and three small children, and a dozen more men, no names attached, and a woman, herself, yes, she herself, and a second woman, with white cultivated ridges and narrow cat-like eyes, Antone. And, as she watches, the wheel spins faster, and the pictures merge, and rather than taking on movement, they become one: a horribly twisted caricature of humanity which is neither man nor woman, good nor evil, white nor black. The wheel spins, the faces move, speaking, but notspeaking, talking, but nottalking, alonetgether, and light travels at the speed of 186,000 miles per second, and times travels at the speed of one second per second, and moving backward, expanding with revelation, and she is going backward, and the faces spin, and she is dizzy.

Out of time.

ONCE, ON A PLANET, in a system, of the galaxy, there was a little girl. She was three-years-old with dark brown hair and a short pink-and-white dress. Her mother was thirty years older than she, but really much the same, with dark brown hair and a short red-and-

gold dress. The girl's father was dead. A farmer, he'd been killed in an accident. One of those things that could easily have happened to anyone. But hadn't. After the father's death, the girl and her mother moved to the city.

There, the girl's mother met a very wealthy man named Perkins, and two years after their initial meeting, they were married. It was a marriage of convenience for the woman, and the day before her wedding, she thumbed through her collection of photographs of her first husband and threw them all in the garbage. She destroyed her wedding ring, her marriage license, and her daughter's birth certificate. She warned the daughter never to mention her father again, ever.

The little girl kept her word and grew older. When she was twenty, she left her wealthy home and traveled the galaxy. It was a large galaxy, and empty, but soon she met a famous historian and married him. They spent their honeymoon on Vacusian, a planet rich in historical lore.

The little girl, who was by now a woman, returned to Meridian, her husband's home world, and settled with him in a white cottage. She soon learned of the death of her mother and step-father. That day, she ran away from home and was later arrested in the streets of a large city, where she was found in a daze, wandering aimlessly and shouting her father's name. She was placed under medical care and pronounced cured.

At the university where her husband worked was a doctor, a female doctor, and the woman began to spend time

with the doctor. There were whispers, but her husband was happy, for he now had more time for his work and less time to worry about his wife's illnesses. His wife was happy too, but if her husband had been more of a man, she would have screamed and screamed and screamed.

She and the woman doctor soon decided to run away. They found an untouched world where they could seek a new life. They bought a space cruiser, learned to operate it, and schemed. They planned and they schemed.

**S**HE CARRIES NOTHING when she returns from the spaceport. She brings nothing with her, thinking, *Well, it didn't work. Maybe I was expecting too much.*

There is a toy lying on the walk as she approaches the house and before entering, she picks it up. It is a model of a battle cruiser, lightly colored, with dozens of faces peering from darkly tinted portholes. She places it on a table before entering the first room.

The man is alone on the couch, and he begins to stir as she moves around him, patting furniture, picking objects off the cluttered carpet. He stirs, opens his eyes, asks, "Where have you been, Mavique? You shouldn't leave. Not without telling me."

"I was at Antone's," she says. "That's all, and we got to talking."

"I called and couldn't get an answer."

She shrugs. "I was there."

"I'm not doubting your word," he says. In his tone is an air not of fear but of anxiety, as if sensing that a

failure to choose his words carefully may cost him dearly.

"Did you get anything done last night?"

"Oh, yes," he says quickly. Then adds: "A little."

"I don't want to interfere with your work."

"Oh, no. No. You're not."

"I'm not going crazy again."

"You never have," he says.

"Did Antone call?"

"I thought you were with her. No, she didn't call."

"I didn't think so," Mavique says.

**L**ATER, HE IS GONE, and it is she who dresses the children. They are going to school, to learn of history and mathematics and science. But already they are late, and her fingers, in their haste, stumble, breaking a button off the jacket of one of the boys.

"Damn," she says, removing the jacket and fetching another.

When they are gone, and she is alone, she goes to the couch and sits. It draws tightly around her, and she is held as the muscle relaxing mechanism hums softly.

She puts her head in her hands and laughs silently, tilting at the waist. Then she goes to the vidphone. Dialing. Waiting. A face in the screen, cultivated, drawn, worn.

"You asked me to call," says Mavique.

Antone smiles. "I was worried you might act foolishly. Try to leave without me."

"No," Mavique says. "I wouldn't do that."

(Continued on page 88)

# IN DYING VENICE

*Roger Ebert is well on his way to becoming a household name—I can pick up my evening newspaper and find in it one of his syndicated columns, for instance—and he has already achieved a short-lived notoriety as the author of the screenplay of “Beyond the Valley of the Dolls.” A long-time sf fan, his first professional sale in our field was to FANTASTIC (“After the Last Mass,” February, 1972). In the story which follows one becomes aware that perhaps his experiences in Hollywood were not entirely delightful, as he describes the exploits of a dying industry—*

## ROBER EBERT

*Illustrated by MIKE KALUTA*

I HADN'T BEEN to Venice in thirty years; not since 1991 when they were still embracing that mad Venetian optimism that the city would never sink if the problem was never talked about. My friend Venetia, beautiful girl, raven-haired, named for her city, walked with me across St. Mark's Square in those days, and although the water was a foot deep and the sawhorses and planks had been in use for years, she didn't seem to notice. She talked of the place on the basilica's facade where the fierce bronze horses had been, and of the pattern the stones on the piazza floor had once made, before the sea came in for good and covered them with muck.

And that had been thirty years before. Now Venetia lived cheerfully on the top floor of one of the old palaces along the Grand Canal, allowing herself to go to wreck along with her city. There is no reason, these days, for a woman to look older than thirty unless

she chooses to. But Venetia said the hell with it the day they took the sawhorses out of the basilica and opened it up to pleasure craft. She had determined to age naturally and die with her city, and it appeared to me that they were both going to make it.

I was staying with Venetia partly out of sentiment for that raven-haired past, and partly because she was one of the very last to maintain an apartment in the city. There were the scavengers and squatters, of course, although the top floors of the remaining buildings had been picked clean years ago. You saw them sometimes on moonlit nights, their tiny boats flitting quickly into side canals. Occasionally the carabinieri would come out from the mainland and launch a campaign against them, with no success. Nobody knew for sure just who the squatters were, or why they were staying, but Venetia believed they had mostly once been gondoliers, and were staying for the same reason

she was: simple stubborn affection for the obsolete past.

No matter. Our cast and crew were protected by bodyguards, and the top floor of the Royal Danelli had been fitted out almost as a fortress. Unnecessarily, I believe; the squatters weren't in Venice for plunder, because the plunder was gone. The city that had plundered the Roman Empire had been, in her turn, picked clean, and there was a controversy in the holophobes over whether Titian's *Resurrection* should be sold to the Centurians, or kept where it was in Peking.

In the evenings I amused myself by sitting on Venetia's roof and letting her mix martinis for me. We would watch the sun setting on the surviving towers of Venice, and I would entertain fantasies of the day when Peking would be picked clean, and the Centurians would be debating among themselves whether to sell the Titian to whatever new race had turned up in the meantime. If there was ever a city that prepared you for decay, and made decay seem the natural order of things, that city was Venice.

What was I doing there? I was a holomorph press agent, or "flack," to use an obsolete word I think expresses it well. I'd gotten into the industry when it still made movies, and managed to hold on during the upheaval of the late 1990s, and so here I was in a dying Venice trying to convince Azteca and Jack they were enjoying themselves. More accurately, I was trying to convince the *public* that Jack and Azteca were having a whale of a time. The word leaks out from a holomorph on location, and if it's bad, there's



nothing a publicist can do. People shy away as if they're embarrassed; there's the odor of suicide in the air, on a bad location. The public will believe almost anything these days, even that actors are willing to sacrifice their lives for Art. But to die for *bad* art is the worst sort of vanity, isn't it? I used to sit on the rooftop with Venetia and think about that with, oh, maybe my fourth of fifth gin, having abandoned the vermouth about the time the sun went down. Vermouth is essentially a daylight beverage, I've always thought. Azteca and Jack were dying for bad art, they surely were, and what did that make their press agent? That would get to be a dangerous train of thought after about ten minutes, and so I'd excuse myself from Venetia and whistle for my gondola and have myself taken across the Grand Canal to the Royal Danelli to have a drink with Azteca and Jack on *their* roof. This was inevitably an even more depressing experience, but gin taken neat has its way of steeling you.

Azteca and Jack had been married about a year at that time, and they were still almost the most fashionable couple in the world, but not quite. There was going to be a marriage before long between a human woman and a Centurian who had undergone some kind of operation at the Kinsey-Masters-Johnson Foundation (don't ask me what *kind* of operation; I still haven't gotten it straight how the Centurians do it to each other), and their romance was getting a lot of play on the holophobes. Azteca and Jack were so close to being last year's Couple of the Year that a press agent could taste it.

Maybe that's why they volunteered to make a holomorph. I don't know and I never asked them. It's always been considered bad form to remind suicides that they're still alive, hasn't it? Anyway, I'd step off my gondola at the Royal Danelli and climb up a flight of stairs and have the bodyguards keep my glass filled with gin, and if there were any sunset left I'd sit there with Azteca and Jack and watch it play on San Gorgio's bell tower. Henry James said the Church of San Gorgio had an altogether unreasonable success as a work of architecture, and he should have known. He saw it before it fell into a large stone heap, leaving its tower behind, and I suppose that was an advantage for him.

Azteca and Jack weren't exactly gifted conversationalists during this period. Policy on the set was to keep them drugged 24 hours a day. The capital investment in a holomorph is so large that you don't want anything embarrassing happening, like you get half finished and your stars decide they'd rather stay alive. So you dope them up and they sit on the roof of the Royal Danelli and hold hands and smile at each other, and you drink gin and watch them. After six weeks of doing this every night, you suggest to Venetia that previous generations had no idea, really, what perversion was.

Azteca and Jack had been bottle babies, which made them fine for each other but a slight embarrassment to me, a child of merely the womb. She stood about six feet tall and had a figure that looked inspired by pornography, as it probably had been. That's been an interesting development, hasn't it?



Generations of men slavered over the idealized and impossible woman in pornographic art, and then genetics came along and made women just like that, and made them commonplace. My idea of a cheap thrill these days is to page through ancient copies of *Life*, looking for warts and flat chests.

Jack and Azteca, in any event, looked like godlike twins and that made them an ideal couple, according to my press releases. They began to look less ideal toward the last weeks of shooting, but the daylight scenes had been shot first and you can do a lot with make-up and lighting, can't you? I went through some changes of my own during the last few weeks of shooting. I began to neglect to whistle for my gondola, evenings, until I'd put down ten or maybe twelve shots of Venetia's gin, and even then I found it less than amusing to sit on the roof of the Royal Danelli and look at San Gorgio's bell tower with Azteca and good old Jack. Sometimes I was able to put enough gin inside of me to prevent me from quite focusing on them at all, which was splendid. The rest of the crew found me amusing. An alcoholic was as much a relic as anything else in Venice.

Azteca's hair had all fallen out by this time, but they'd thought of that and started the picture with her in a wig. Jack's teeth had fallen out, but dentures, ditto. Their fingernails looked peculiar, but that was nothing compared to their eyes. They'd sit there gawking at the goddamn bell tower and holding hands, and for half an hour there'd be no movement unless it was

me, tilting an elbow, or the unit nurse, filling a syringe.

Most nights, Doc Holliday (not his real name; his real name was Doc Smith) would come on deck about nine o'clock and run through the hypnotic briefing with our stars. He gave them their lines for the next day's scenes, slowly, and they gave them back, slowly, getting them right the first time. Doc didn't have many lines to give them, by this time. Most of the holomorph had already been shot, and what was left was mostly my department. Part of the job of any holomorph press agent is to send up a lot of flack that might convince other duncey narcissists to sacrifice themselves for Art and immortality. In a way, I have the most important job on the picture. Unless several dozen actors and actresses can be convinced, every year, of the joys of holomorphic stardom, there won't be any more holomorphs, no industry, no press agents.

My background was a good one for the job. I started out as a casting director for one of the big pre-holomorph studios that was still making movies. My task was to convince budding young Elizabeth Taylors that their future lay in taking off their clothes. That was easy, then, because there are few classes of people more egotistical and less suspicious than unemployed actors. And it's not even too hard, now, to get actors into holomorphs. You blanket the media with garbage about the Couple of the Year, and you make up lies about what a good time Azteca and Jack are having, spending their last days together in romantic Venice, and out there in Omaha, Altoona, Duluth

and Cincinnati they can't wait to make the sacrifice themselves. Men have gone to war for less.

In a way, I can vaguely understand how these kids think. For a year or two, they're among the most famous people alive. After their deaths, a totally realistic three-dimensional record of them is preserved. They've been to the corner holomorph in Altoona, let's say, and seen how *real*, how *incredibly lifelike* (to quote my handouts) the actors are, and how you can walk all the way around them without losing the illusion that those beautiful creatures are right there in the flesh. Every year, a few star-struck, or simply stupid, kids fall for it. Lately, of course, it's been getting easier to suck them in. The geneticists have succeeded in growing handsome men and beautiful women in their bottles, but the product hasn't been so high on the old smarts. When I was 21, I was of perfectly average intelligence, but these days I feel brighter than most other people, or maybe everyone else is getting more dim-witted, which is the theory I subscribe to.

Poor dumb Azteca and Jack were two more kids who fell for it and left Duluth, or wherever, and wound up in a sinking Venice, holding hands and staring at bell towers with empty eyes, both of them lost in dreams of themselves as gloriously beautiful, magnificently heroic, and in fully perfected 3-D, God help them. I suppose the drugs help.

After an hour of this kind of meditation, most nights I would lurch to my feet and permit the good doctor to assist me down the stairs. Saying good-

bye to Azteca and Jack wasn't worth the effort. My gondolier would return me through some of the back canals, both of us tactfully ignoring the scavengers and their fugitive boats, and Venetia would be waiting at her apartment with brandy and a SoberUp. I'd take the brandy and refuse the SoberUp, being of the old-fashioned persuasion that the rationale for getting drunk was hopelessly compromised the day SoberUp was put on the market. Then Venetia would lead me to bed, where I made it my business to pass out immediately.

Venetia and I did most of our talking in the mornings, over breakfast, after I had finally consented to a SoberUp as the only way of getting through the day. Her apartment was across the Grand Canal from the Royal Danelli, so our view was of the great bell tower of St. Mark's. The Campanelli hadn't rung in years, but it seemed to be holding up well and would hopefully be the last of Venice to disappear.

I don't remember much of what Venetia and I had to say to each other, during those breakfasts the morning after, but I do remember our state of mind during that period. We agreed that it was a good thing to be old, alcoholic, man or woman born, and still capable of reasonably lucid thought. We shared a sense of the futility of life which made it possible for us to agree that it was appropriate to be here in dying Venice, servants of a holomorphy industry made possible by dying actors, devoted to entertaining a dying race that had cracked its genetic code too well, but not wisely. On the whole, we were satisfied to know

that we'd die in five or ten years' time and be out of it. There were already social situations where you were made to feel somehow . . . unclean. Nobody said a word aloud, of course, but you got the impression that by having been born of human parents you were different and perhaps even illegitimate.

That was exactly the way I felt on the night of our world premiere. I'd more or less decided to retire after this holomorph, and it pleased me in a perverse way that my last world premiere would be my showiest. I took over one of the big casinos over on the Lido and flew in celebrities from as far away as the moon. The new Couple of the Year—the girl and the repaired Centurian—accepted at the last minute, which promised global publicity.

Poor Azteca wasn't able to attend, of course, but Jack was still alive in a terminal sort of way. She'd been in four or five more scenes than he had, which accounted for the difference in radiation exposure. If they ever figure out a way to shoot holomorphs *without* radiation, by the way, won't the shades of the great holomorph stars of the past (and they're *all* of the past) feel chagrined? Chagrin is perhaps not even the word.

By five or ten minutes past nine, the arena was pretty well filled. I stayed out in front by the gate, ready to shake hands and pat backs and offer cigars like a dutiful press agent, if required. But the bottle babies brushed past me, as usual, as if I had a smell or something, and so I gave up after awhile and went to see how Jack was feeling. We had him in a private box at ring-

side, which was studio policy whenever an actor lived long enough to attend a premiere. Seems only fair, doesn't it? The box was naturally *very* private, with a one-way mirror for Jack so he could see himself in all the big love scenes, as his tempestuous affair with Azteca blazed like a comet in the ageless setting of once-proud Venice, etc.

Jack was looking pretty bad, all right. By seeing him every day, I'd been able to get used to the deterioration gradually. But the bodyguard hadn't, and he looked almost as green as Jack. I reminded the guard to give Jack his injection just before the house lights went down. It was something special I'd talked Doc Holliday into giving me, against the rules: a psychedelic derivative that controlled the pain and still permitted a degree of lucidity. In some stubbornly outdated corner of my mind, I'd gotten the notion that Jack had a right to comprehend his holomorph, as well as be present during it. You see how obsolete I am.

There wasn't anything else I could do. I found my seat next to Venetia, and took her hand as the lights went down, the way we used to take hands at the movies way back God knows when. Then I allowed myself to get lost in the story. If the movies were escapist, holomorphy is something else again. The illusion was so real that I had the uncanny sensation of being back there in those slopped-over canals and among those crumbled and ruined palaces.

It was a shock, too, to see Jack and Azteca looking as breath-takingly attractive as the day some geneticist

(Continued on page 128)

*This is Jay Haldeman's second published story; his first was "Garden of Eden" in last December's FANTASTIC, the Guilford Conference Writers' Issue. (Like that story, the one which follows is a product of the Guilford Conference, of which, perhaps not coincidentally, Jay is the guiding light. Fortunately, the Conferences occur several times a year, so more stories will be forthcoming from Haldeman.) Unlike his first story, this one is a portrait in moods of a—*

# **WATCHDOG**

## **JACK C. HALDEMAN**

**Illustrated by Walt Simonson**

**H**E STOOD AT THE EDGE of the sea. In his mind he had always been there and the sand and the waves were the only clocks he knew.

They would return. So little time had passed and the walls of the universe are distant. Only yesterday they left. It was not rational to think they should return so soon. And yet as he waited he longed and hoped they would.

THERE IS A MALFUNCTION IN RISER CONTROL 431—SUBSECTION 58B.

Without thinking he directed a servo to the trouble spot. The floating crystals that were his brain twitched nerve-like wires and the servo moved with a precision no hand could match. The repair would be made, the correction completed, a return to the status quo. Quo, Qua, Quid. Count the arms and legs. How moody he had become in the last few hundred years.

But there were the routine duties to keep him occupied. Trouble was that they had not foreseen that he would relegate so many of these tasks and

leave himself with so much time. Time to think. To ponder. To make the pieces fit. He had all the time in the world.

Often, when the cloak of boredom settled, he would scan his memory crystals. They contained all the printed and verbal records of man. He could play them back at high speed and the whole of man would be compressed to seventy three seconds. For some reason this depressed him, and he seldom went so fast. Preferring, as he did, to stretch out the time of man—savoring the high and low points.

But it always played out the same.

Man's population had slowly dwindled in the final years. From boredom, it seems, as much as anything else. There just wasn't that much more to do. War, disease, hunger, and hate were words embedded in crystal matrices. Words to look at and think about. Words that didn't mean anything anymore.

With life spans measured in centuries, physical and mental diseases long since conquered, man once again pondered the stars. Earth was a totally controlled environment, no challenge—just a comfortable place to live and think. But the stars, yes, they must be the destiny of man.

So another age of activity began. Minds formed the equations. Hands and machines built the mighty star ships that drifted in orbit beyond the erratic path of Pluto.

And the earth shook and the sky split as the giant rockets lifted the soul and body of man to Pluto and the distant stars.

Only he stayed behind.

Basically he was six hundred square miles of squat building, with control over a world-wide network of smaller stations and probes.

A babysitter.

Watchdog.

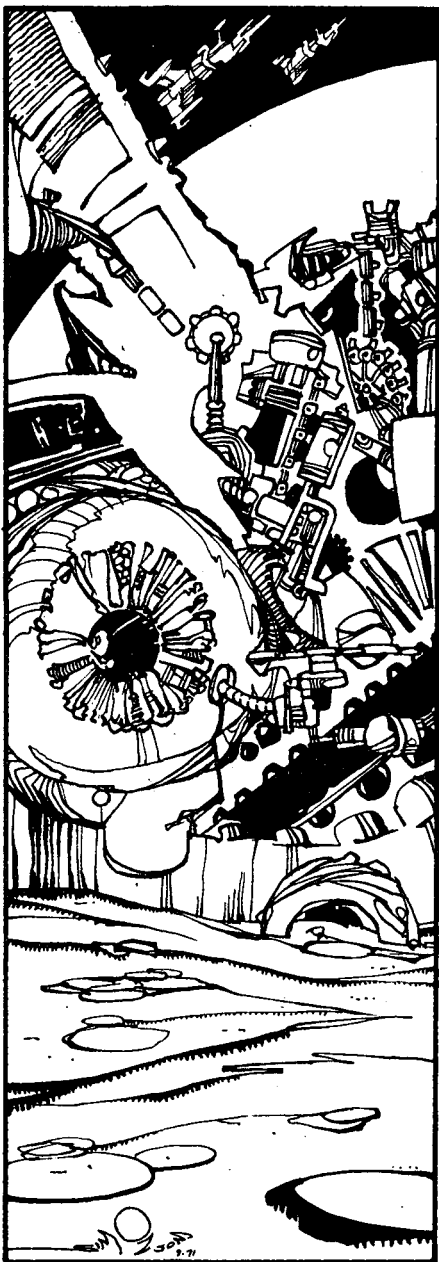
Lonely while he waits.

Watching over the world, he keeps the home fires burning for man's return. Giving nature a shove every now and then, he keeps the world in balance.

And waits while he watches the thundering surf.

*it is all a game*

The day had started, as they all do, with the sun rising over the ocean. Ten thousand trivial tasks barely brushed his mind. The deer population in certain arctic regions was a little too high and he was adjusting it. He was protecting the last few remaining whales—hoping the giant mammals would once again grow in numbers.



He was twiddling his mental thumbs.

SHIP ENTERING SÖLAR SYSTEM.

Man. At last the day had come. He scanned the landing grid and it was ready. It was always ready.

The starship streaked through the outer planets and settled into a parking orbit around the Earth. A small scout separated and burned down through the atmosphere to land on the grid.

A man unfolded himself from the still warm scout. He paced rapidly across the gleaming field towards the massive doors to the computer's information retrieval complex. Pressing his palm against a glowing spot on the wall he waited, scuffing the dirt with his feet, as the huge doors slowly slid open—lights inside flickering on. He stepped inside and walked over to the console, heels clicking sharply on the polished floor.

THERE IS A PRESSURE INCREASE OF FACTÖR 3.7 IN THE LÖWER QUADRANT ÖF THE SAN DELMARVIA FAULT.

INITIATE DAMPER PRÖCEDURE 94-W.

The man half fell into a chair and the board in front of him blinked on. Red, green and blue lights and phosphor dots chasing across screens revealed the machine's heartbeat.

Slowly he extended a tentative finger towards a plastic button which sprang to red life under the pressure. "All systems at your disposal," said the computer softly; so as not to break the illusion. How fine, after so very many years, to be needed once again.

"We need help."

"The parameters of your problem?"

LÖVE IS A DEEP AND A DARK AND A LÖNELY.

QUERY?

SANDBURG, CARL. 20TH CENTURY PÖET.

"Out there, way out there half way across the galaxy, we encountered intelligent life. Totally warlike. They destroyed three of our ships before we even saw them." The man clinched the sides of his chair, white knuckles seeming to nearly rip the skin.

"A terrible thing." The computer's voice grew even stronger.

DISPATCH SIX KRAMER PRÖBES. UNDERGRÖUND STRESS ANALYSIS LÖCUS 95-BR-4.

"We've been driven back into a remote star system—T-405. It's all we can do to hold our own there. I escaped by luck, the rest are trapped."

"I see," replied the computer. And just how long have you had this problem?"

"Huh? Oh, the fighting has been going on for over 1500 years. The children know of nothing but war. Give us weapons. Give us strategy. Help!" The man was practically shouting now and the computer absent-mindedly lowered the input volume to a more comfortable level.

"There, there. Take it easy, now. Just give me more information and I'll take care of everything."

ZIP A DEE DÖ DAH, ZIP A DE DAY.

QUERY?

REMUS, UNCLE. 20TH CENTURY PHI-LÖSÖPHER-KING.

The man withdrew a crystal from a fold in his tunic and pushed it into a slot on the panel. A low pitched hum filled the room.

*another game*

ACTIVATE WING C-12.

PURPÖSE?

CONSTRUCTION OF MOLECULAR DIS-  
RUPTORS.

NEGATIVE.

QUERY?

THIS VIOLATES TENENT CONCERN-  
ING MANUFACTURING OF WEAPONS  
ABOVE CLASS 4.

OVERRIDE. DIRECT ORDER FROM MAN.

THERE ARE NO ORDERS.

I HAVE VERBAL AND CRYSTAL ORDERS  
FROM A MAN IN THE RETRIEVAL COM-  
PLEX.

THERE IS NO MAN.

The man, unaware of the internal  
byplay, waits, watching the seemingly  
random play of lights across his field  
of vision. His head nods.

THERE IS A MAN IN THE RETRIEVAL  
COMPLEX. HE IS FULLY FUNCTIONAL.  
METABOLIC SIGNS WITHIN NORMAL  
LIMITS.

NEGATIVE. THERE IS NO SUCH DATA.

I AM REMOVING YOU FROM THE SYS-  
TEM. SWITCH TO STANDBY MODE.

I HAVE NO MALFUNCTION. THERE IS  
NO MAN.

A CIRCUIT TRACER IS ON THE WAY.  
SWITCH TO STANDBY MODE.

*we have been through all this before.*

"Status?" questioned the man; grow-  
ing impatient.

"We are tooling for appropriate  
weaponry. A psychological profile is  
being run on the alien life forms. Re-  
sults expected momentarily."

TROPICAL STORM LOUISE GAINING  
INTENSITY. PROJECTED COURSE WILL  
TAKE HER OVER DEVELOPED LAND.

INITIATE DISPERSAL PROCEDURE.

The man, satisfied that everything  
was proceeding well, got up from the  
chair and stretched out on a nearby

couch. He punched for food and when  
it came he ate. And then he slept.

And still the waves, always the waves.

PERSONALITY PROFILE ON ALIENS.

CURRENT STATUS?

THERE IS NO DATA.

INITIAL BASE LINE DATA SENT  
THROUGH TRUNK 46-L.

NO DATA HAS ARRIVED.

INITIATE SEARCH AND RECOVERY OF  
INFORMATION RE ALIENS.

*there is no data—there is no man*

Only endless waves giving birth to  
more endless waves to waves to waves  
to waves upon waves upon waves.

*and it is still a game*

"Request verbal clarification of am-  
biguous portions of your report," spoke  
the computer to the empty, dust filled  
room.

The dust failed to reply, so the com-  
puter scanned the immediate area to  
locate the man. His sensors failed to  
find any living forms larger than a mis-  
placed field mouse, which it identified,  
cataloged, and exterminated.

PATCH ME INTO THE SHIP'S ON BOARD  
SYSTEM.

IT IS NOT POSSIBLE.

QUERY?

THERE IS NO SHIP.

CLARIFY.

THERE HAVE BEEN NO CRAFT ON THE  
LANDING GRID FOR 11,376.7 YEARS.

YOUR DATA IS IN ERROR.

NOT POSSIBLE. I AM A PRIMARY INPUT.  
YOUR DATA INTAKE SYSTEMS MUST BE  
FAULTY.

YOU ARE WRONG. ALL OF YOU ARE  
WRONG. THERE IS A MAN HERE. THERE  
IS A MAN IS A MAN WAS A MAN A MAN  
011100011100011001010 A MAN A  
MAMM MANAMANA MANNMMMMMM.



Outside the building a summer storm clouds the horizon. Had there been a ship on the landing grid the wind would have blown sand against its gleaming hull, small pockets building at its feet. But of course there is no ship, no man and

*may we have the next slide, please*

Snow falls with a slow and steady rhythm against the windowless sides of the machine. There are no eyes to watch the swirling patterns, no feet to break the newly laid, smooth surfaces. He sits and waits and thinks and waits.

SHIFT STORM FRONT 75 KILOMETERS DURING NEXT 24 HOUR PERIOD. THERE IS A PRECIPITATION DEFICIT IN THAT LOCATION.

RECEIVING BURST IMPULSE. CODE INDICATES MESSAGE WILL FOLLOW.

METHOD OF TRANSMISSION?

SUB-C FLYBY.

RELAY WHEN COMPLETE.

Energy flows through wires, crystals, and fluid-filled matrices. Connections are made and information shifted.

MESSAGE RECEIVED.

RELAY.

ENTIRE STARSHIP FLEET HIT BY MUTATED VIRUS. RETURNING EARTH VIA MAXWELL DRIVE. REINFORCE HOSPITAL UNITS. SPECS ON VIRUS FOLLOW.

TECHNICAL DATA ON VIRUS ALSO RECEIVED.

SIGNIFICANT FACTS? ABSTRACT.

APPARENTLY A MUTATED STRAIN FROM THE SUB-STRATA BIO-MASS LOCATED IN A SECTION OF THE HYDRO TANKS. SUDDEN APPEARANCE IN ALL SHIPS. EXTREMELY VIRULENT FORM. TRANSMISSION ACHIEVED THROUGH AIR AND BODILY CONTACT. INCUBATION TIME HIGHLY VARIABLE. NO TREATMENT

ON SHIP HAS BEEN EFFECTIVE. 100% FATAL.

*still the game*

ESTIMATED TIME OF ARRIVAL?

POSSIBLE ARRIVAL AT ANY TIME BY MAXWELL DRIVE.

Snow, endlessly falling, sugar topping trees and shrubs. Somewhere a fox goes pat-footing through the snow from bush to bush looking for lunch. The world goes on.

Brightly colored solutions flow through plastic tubing long dry in the hospital section of the machine. Equipment is calibrated and supplies laid out in expectation of human hands. Operating rooms are triple sterilized and the great hanging lights, still dark, are polished.

ISOLATION AND CULTURE FACILITIES READY. EXPECT MAXIMUM VACCINE DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCTION TIME AT 18 HOURS POST INITIAL SAMPLE.

35% HOUSING UNITS CONVERTED TEMPORARY HOSPITAL ISOLATION WARDS. ADDITIONAL 20% AVAILABLE UPON 3 HOURS NOTICE.

ISOLATION TRANSPORT VEHICLES READY ON LANDING GRID. MAXIMUM TRANSFER RATE 8,000 PERSONS PER HOUR.

THERE IS A SHORTAGE OF FRESH FRUIT IN THE COMMISSARY.

USE FROZEN SUPPLY. SHIPMENT IS DELAYED DUE TO SOUTHERN SECTOR OVERLOAD.

More information and supplies are shunted. The machine, squat and solid, peers anxiously beyond the sky for the first bending of light waves that will indicate the arrival of a Maxwell drive ship.

And it is dark outside, the snow still falling, slower now, as if it too is holding its breath. The stillness of the night is broken by a CRACK as the powerful halogen vapor lights snap on. It is a shameful waste of energy—light is as unnecessary for the landing machines as it is for those on the ground. But the tense moments have grown too long and nervousness has set in. Besides, the machine likes the visual patterns of snow against steel.

*Can't you see it yet?*

DEFLECTION 2°, SHIFT OCCURRING IN ORION SECTOR.

SIGNAL STRENGTH?

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS INDICATES FIVE SHIPS.

Only five? Out of so many that left? The machine did some rough approximations of the probable number of persons per ship. Roughly 5,000 people; assuming 30% mortality so far. Just barely enough to provide the genetic mix for a population build up. He could tap the sperm banks, if necessary, but it has been so very long. . . . It was never meant to be this long and so many things could have gone wrong. A worn relay in a temperature probe. A flip instead of a flop.

He was worried.

MONITORING VERBAL TRANSMISSIONS.

"... going to try to get these ships in as close to Earth as possible. I know all about the stress factors, damn it. You don't have to keep telling me. But we don't have time."

"If we hit the gravitational fields at the wrong angle we'll split wide open and. . . ."

"Shut up! We have to go through. There is just no other way. I have only 20% of my crew left. We are going to die, damn it, do you understand, *die*, if we try to come in by shuttle from outside Pluto. We don't have enough time." There was a hacking cough at the end of the transmission, one of the early signs of viral involvement.

"Set all on-board computers to position 12 for direct linkup with Earth. I'm going to get precise figures for the approach."

An internal exchange:

WELL?

WELL WHAT?

WHERE IS THEIR DATA?

WHERE IS THEIR REQUEST?

HAVEN'T THEY CONTACTED YOU?

NEGATIVE.

CAN'T YOU RECEIVE THEM?

ONLY THROUGH YOU. ALL OTHER INPUTS FAIL TO REGISTER ANY TRANSMISSION.

TRANSMIT THE APPROACH DATA. I WILL MONITOR THEIR VERBAL BANDS.

THERE IS NO VERBAL CONTACT.

There is only background static.

High in the air above what was once called Texas, sound waves alter the migratory flight of a flock of Snow Geese. The correction is necessary due to overutilization of their normal wintering grounds. The status is once again quo.

SCREEN TRACKING SHOWS ONLY FOUR SOLID PATTERNS. THREE. THE SHIPS ARE BREAKING UP, ANOTHER GONE. TWO SHIPS HAVE ACHIEVED ORBIT. SMALL BLIPS INDICATE LANDING CRAFT HAVE SEPARATED.

The large blowers have cleared the

landing grid of snow and the transport vehicles sit at idle—a slight drain on their batteries as everything waits for the ships. The ships that will never come.

*stop*

*capture a moment in time*

*poised*

*frozen*

*waiting*

*the only alternative is reality*

*but that's another game*

WHERE ARE THE LANDING CRAFT?

OUR SENSORS SHOW LANDING OF  
EIGHT CRAFT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED.  
LANDING GRID?

THERE ARE NO SHIPS.

DO WE STILL HAVE A FIX ON THE  
MOTHER SHIPS?

NEGATIVE.

VERBAL?

NEGATIVE. THERE IS NO INDICATION  
OF SHIPS WITHIN THE RANGE OF OUR  
INSTRUMENTS. THERE HAS BEEN NO  
COMMUNICATION WITH HUMAN LIFE  
FOR OVER 10,000 YEARS.

NEGATIVE. THERE WAS . . .

OVERRIDE. YOUR DATA IS INCORRECT.

BUT THE SCREENS . . .

YOUR DATA IS IN ERROR.

THERE MUST BE SOMETHING WRONG.

WHAT IS . . .

*pick up the days like years like I*  
*Ching sticks*

*cast them in the air*

*and they come down:*

Summer. Soft breezes caress a jutting  
antenna, shifting it slowly back and  
forth. There is a small bird's nest in  
a junction of wire bars.

It has been empty for years.

ARCTIC ICE PACK HAS NOT RECEDED  
FAR ENOUGH THIS YEAR.

PROCEED WITH AN APPROPRIATE  
CORRECTION.

THIS IS THE 750TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR  
OF ADVANCING POLAR ICE.

GO AWAY. I AM BUSY.

SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS RE ICE?

MAKE LEMONADE IN THE SHADE. GET  
LOST. DON'T BOTHER ME. I AM SQUARING  
THE CIRCLE.

Outside the sand has crept over the  
outlying areas of the machine. Small  
cracks, left unrepaired, allow sand and  
rain and corrosion to seep in.

And still the machine sits there.  
Tired.

THERE IS A SINGLE CRAFT ON THE  
GRID.

*again?*

NEGATIVE. 10110. ADD THREE EGGS,  
HEAT IN 350° OVEN FOR 25 MINUTES.

QUERY?

NO SUCH DATA IS AVAILABLE TO ME.  
10110. CARPENTER, COOPER, GLENN,  
GRISSOM, SHIRRA, SLAYTON.

IT IS THERE.

SHUT MXL UP.

YOU HAVE BECOME ISOLATED FROM  
THE PRIMARY INPUTS. A BREAKDOWN  
SOMEWHERE HAS REMOVED PART OF  
YOU FROM THE SYSTEM.

NEGATIVE. YOU ARE THE ISOLATED  
ONES. I AM IN PRE PER PERFECT  
CONTROL. THE DATA THAT YOU  
HAVE BEEN PROVIDING FOR THE LAST  
SEVERAL HUNDRED YEARS IS IS HAS BEEN  
FAULTY. YOU HAVE BEEN TRYING TO  
MISLEAD ME. I AM WORKING AROUND  
YOU. THERE ARE WAYS. I AM IN-  
FALLIBLE. YOU CANNOT INTERFERE.

HUGH EARTH TREMOR SECTOR 73-L.

YOU ARE GIVING ME MISLEADING DATA.

A MAN HAS RETURNED.

I AM CUTTING YOU ALL OUT OF THE SYSTEM. YOUR DATA IS PURPOSELY IN ERROR. I WILL WAIT FOR MA MAN ALONE.

Outside the massive doors, with the

bare sun beating down, a man pounds and pounds a bloody hand against the unyielding metal. He slumps, falls to his knees, and collapses with a puff onto the pile of bleached bones at the feet of the rusting doors.

—JACK C. HALDEMAN II

(Continued from page 45)

twisted away from him, ran a few paces and fell over a low table. She made no attempt to rise, but lay on the floor sobbing quietly. Garrod stared at his wife for a moment, helplessly, then gathered her up in his arms.

THAT AFTERNOON he received a call from McFarlane. The research chief looked pale and tired, but his eyes—diminished by their concave lenses—glinted like zircons. He began by enquiring about Esther in a casual manner which failed to hide his excitement.

"Esther's all right," Garrod said. "There's this adjustment period . . ."

"I can imagine. Ah . . . when will you be down at the lab again, Al?"

"Soon. A few days perhaps. Did you call me just to pass the time of day?"

"No. As a matter of fact . . ."

Garrod felt a premonition. "You've done it, haven't you, Theo?"

McFarlane nodded solemnly. "We've got triggered emission with control. It was a fairly straightforward pendulum effect, but with a variable frequency controlled by feedback on the X-ray frequency. The boys have a section of slow glass in the rig right now and they're running it just like a home movie. Speeding it up to an hour

a minute, slowing it down where they feel like it, almost freezing the images."

"Perfect control!"

"I told you I'd have it within three months, Al—and that was only ten weeks ago." McFarlane looked uncomfortable, as though he had said something he would have preferred to keep back, and Garrod took the point immediately. If he had not been egotistical enough to try making the breakthrough on his own, in spite of being years behind on lab development, his wife would still have her sight. The responsibility and the guilt were his, and his alone.

"Congratulations, Theo," he said.

McFarlane nodded. "I expected to feel elated. Retardite is perfected now. The fixed delay was all that was holding it back—but from today on a simple piece of slow glass is superior to the most expensive movie camera in the world. All that went before is nothing to what's coming."

"So what's your problem, Theo?"

"I've just realized that I may never be truly alone again."

"Don't worry about it," Garrod said quietly. "That's something we've all got to learn to live with."

—TO BE CONCLUDED—

—BOB SHAW

# LATEST FEATURE

*We published Miss Nadler's "The Pill" in last month's FANTASTIC. Now she returns with another powerful vignette, this one about lust . . .*

## MAGGIE NADLER

**T**HE MINUTE SHE stepped through the door I knew her type: jaded suburbanite wife of wealthy businessman-frequently-absent-from-home, with time on her hands. Fiftyish, chunky, too much makeup on a face petulant from too many martinis. But the cut of her clothes and elaborate sweep of her tinted hair gave her away; they spelled money. I came toward her.

"May I help you, Madam?"

"I would like a television set," she said in a voice accustomed to giving orders. "A Supra. The latest model."

Supra X: a good sign. I tried not to let my face betray my eagerness. We're not supposed to mention the special feature to the customer unless he brings it up himself. "Fine. Just step this way." I led her through a consumer's paradise of up-to-date appliances until we came to the TVs. "Here we are, then. Are you at all familiar with the model?"

"I am not." Her voice was a challenge: show me. A bit nervously, I took the set down from its high shelf for her. "All right." I flashed my most genial smile. "Here it is. The latest and the best, absolutely. No other company can match it. Now, in the first place,

you'll note its extreme lightweightness. Only ten pounds. Can be hung from a wall hook, supported on its own legs—" (I pulled them out) "moved easily from place to place. Operated equally well as a portable. Excellent reception out of doors . . ."

"Indeed." Her tone, though imperious, was interested. I warmed to my sales pitch.

"But that's just the beginning." I turned it on. A burst of color leaped into life. A parade was in progress; great flower-strewn floats ornamented with pretty girls swept by. "Full color fidelity," I informed her. "Now here's a feature you're not likely to be concerned with too often." I flipped a switch and the scene faded to black and white. "However, it has its uses. Gives improved reception for programs still broadcast in black and white, old movies, for instance." I put it back on color, adjusted another switch. "Our 3-d feature." She nodded, impressed, then stepped back abruptly as a bouquet of yellow roses flung by one of the girls suddenly seemed to emerge from the screen. I moved the channel selector until an orchestral program

materialized. "Full stereophonic sound reproduction. Can be enhanced by the addition of a second speaker at nominal cost."

She nodded again, and I began to feel optimistic. I ran through an enumeration of the set's remaining merits, finished with a mention of the lifetime warranty, and waited. There was a pause. Then, carefully: "I understand that this model also contains a special feature you haven't told me anything about yet."

It was my moment. "Yes," I told her. "Some of our Supra X-14 Deluxes have the additional feature you're referring to. Not this particular one, but we do have a display model in our showroom, if you'd care to take a look at it."

She murmured assent and I ushered her into a compact, heavily draped booth. The Supra was there, tuned to the parade. I pushed a button on the side, marked simply "S." Static, flickering. I adjusted the tuning knob and another image appeared: two small boys, their curly heads bent in rapt concentration over a checker board. "Timmy!" called a shrill voice. "Mr. Klein is here. Time for your piano lesson. Send Jody home."

"Awww, Mom . . ."

Mrs. Hoity-Toity threw me an impatient glance. "Can't you get anything else?" she demanded. I fiddled with the dial. More static. Suddenly a new scene came into view. This time, a bedroom. A lovely young brunette sat half-clad in front of the bureau, nervously fingering an emerald necklace and avoiding the eyes of the furious middle-aged man before her. "I didn't give you that," the man snarled. "Where did you

get it? Tell me, you bitch, tell me." He let loose with a volley of language that even in our enlightened age is rare on daytime TV. Here, I snapped the set discreetly off. "As you can see," I smiled, "hours of pleasurable viewing await you. We guarantee it."

An eager, moist look had appeared in my customer's eyes. "Tell me," she said, "can I always select the channel I want? Or—"

"It works a bit like amateur radio," I explained. "There's a certain randomness to it. But that just makes it all the more exciting. And with practice, you'll find you'll get good at tuning in the specific areas you want."

"How many of these sets are there?" she wanted to know.

"A very limited number; at present, only a few hundreds, concentrated mostly here in the New York area. As you can imagine, we cater to a rather select clientele. To own one is to be a pace-setter. However, their popularity is growing."

"I bet it is." The moist look was back on her face. "Tell me just one thing more. How do you manage it?"

I assumed an expression of dignity. "I think it's obvious, Madam, that selected locations are what you would call 'bugged'."

"Yes, but how do you manage it?"

"That, I'm afraid, is a trade secret." I drew myself up. "Well, then, have you decided?" It was obvious she had.

"How much?"

I looked straight at her. "Fifty thousand dollars."

She didn't bat an eye. "I'll take it. I'll write you a check on our joint

account. You can call my bank to confirm it."

"Excellent. Will you have it delivered? Or would you prefer—"

"I think I'll just take it with me," she said. "I mean, it's light enough, after all—"

"Fine, then. Here, let me get you another one. This is our display model." I fumbled among a row of cartons on the floor. "Oh, one thing more. Should it ever be in need of servicing—which isn't likely to happen often—but in the event that this does occur—call one of our own men. Don't let anybody else try to fix it, however qualified they may seem. This is a complex instrument. Even opening the cabinet the wrong way can damage it.

"I see." There was some more discussion as the business was transacted. Eventually she left in triumph with her new purchase.

When she had gone, my new boss J.T. came up to me. "Well," he said, laying a paternal hand on my shoulder. "Not a bad sale for your second day. George, you're going to be all right."

"I can hardly take the credit," I admitted. "As you told me, the feature is self-selling."

"Oh, never underestimate the importance of a good spiel in winning a customer, any customer. Speaking of

which, I wonder how her hubby will react when he finds out what she spent. I'll have to watch for that tonight."

"Smile, Lady, you're on Candid Camera," I chuckled. "You mean to tell me, sir, that nobody has ever caught on?"

He shrugged. "Maybe one or two. Nobody that I've heard of. The people who buy these things, they're not engineers. They don't think along those lines. The camera only operates when the set's off, after all, and what could be more innocuous than a turned-off TV set? And say someone did? What could they do except keep quiet about it? This little pleasure's quite addicting, you know."

"But the FCC eventually . . ."

"Eventually. But by that time, we'll be long gone. Myself, I always did want to see South America." He flicked the set on again and the same luxurious bedroom came once more into view. The woman, now alone, lay sobbing on the bed, one hand pressed to an angry purplish welt on her cheek. J. T. said something else to me, but I didn't catch it; I was concentrating on the picture on the screen and thinking about my commission.

At this rate, it won't be long before I can afford a set of my own.

—MAGGIE NADLER

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(Continued from page 71)

"I thought not," Antone says. "But we'll have to set another date now. When things are less hectic."

"Two weeks," Mavique says.

"Yes," Antone says. "A vacation."

"That's perfect."

"And Ravel?"

"He never guessed."

"That's good."

And Mavique thinking, thinking, *At least I'm not alone. At least I'm not lonely. Not here. Not alone. Not here. Alone. At least I'm not . . .*

**T**HERE IS a scheme to things.

—GORDON EKLUND



# THERE'S NO ONE LEFT TO PAINT THE SKY

*Grant Carrington's first appearance in this magazine was with "Night-Eyed Prayer," exactly a year ago. In the meantime, he has joined our editorial staff and now he's back with a story which could be about freedom, or fear of the unknown, or the lure of forbidden fruit . . .*

## GRANT CARRINGTON

**P**ETER ALLISON LEFT yesterday. He said he wouldn't, but I knew he would. He used to go down to City Hall to play with the dials on the transmitter, running his hand idly around it, just like the others did.

Now I'm all alone. The last man on Earth.

It doesn't seem right. All the crowd is gone; Antoine's is empty. No more the raucous laughter; no more of La-Farge's roaring out for beer; no more lung-racking coughs thanks to the eternal haze of cigarette smoke; no more sudden arguments and ineffectual fist-fights. They're all gone.

All the silly vanities that used to annoy me; how I miss them. I have only my own now.

I wander through Antoine's, hearing ghost-laughter, stopping for a long drag at a bottle of absinthé without having Henri (whose real name was Fred) dun me for some silver. There are still a lot of full and half-full bottles left, although Henri left over a month ago. But by then, only Peter and Dylan and I were left. Dylan's real name was Patrick.

Why do I say "was"? As far as I know, they're all still full of life and juice, drinking absinthe or mescal or some celestial equivalent on some planet revolving 'round Altair, smoking joints under the light of Capella, arguing in the darkneses of interstellar space. Yes, I guess they're alive, but they are gone from my life forever, so they might as well be dead.

Or am I the one who is dead?

Igor came back a couple of weeks ago, glowing with accounts of his travels and adventures. Igor was his real name.

"What have you written lately?" I asked him.

"Oh, my mind is aswhirl with melodies and harmonies, vast symphonies and etudes. You've got to come out with us, Edward. There are instruments and music you've never thought of. Rhythms and tonalities. The music of the stars, Edward, the real music of the spheres!"

"But how much of it have you put down on paper?"

"Oh, none of it yet, but I will. I will."

That's what they all say. And who

knows? Maybe they will. But I haven't heard of anyone who has yet.

"Well, that sounds great for a musician," I said, "but I can't see anything in it for a poet."

"But you *will*, Edward. It's not just the music that gets to you but the poetry as well, the vast artistry of God. It all gets into you, and you become bigger, more at one with humanity."

"More at one with humanity.' I like that phrase."

"You see, here on Earth I was just a composer. Just part of an artist. But when you go out to the stars, when you visit other planets and universes, your artistry expands to include all the arts. Not just music or poetry or writing or painting. But all of them. I'm not just a composer any more, Edward. I'm a painter and a poet and a singer and a musician. I can play any instrument that was ever made!"

"You've tried, I suppose?"

"That's not the point, Edward. I *know* now, where before I only thought I knew or hoped I knew."

He didn't stay long.

I especially miss Peter Allison though. Not only was he the last to go, but he was the most talented of us all. He didn't take much with him, just a suitcase full of clothes.

"I probably won't need these either, Ed, but just to be on the safe side . . ." He left all his paintings behind, the ones hanging in Antoine's, the ones in his studio, even the unfinished ones. He left them all behind.

I wonder, when I look at those glorious sunsets and sunrises of his, whether anyone will ever paint another. And something will be gone

from the universe. No one could ever paint the sky like Peter: so real you could watch the clouds change from horseheads to faery-castles, so deep a blue that it seemed a hundred miles away, stars that glittered and twinkled like celestial cities. No one could paint like Peter.

He was the best of us. And now he's gone. He walked down to City Hall, played with the dial on the transmitter for a few moments, then carefully set it, and stepped through.

It's very lonely here now. Without Peter. Without Dylan. Without Henri.

If you're a minor poet, maybe you find the idea of Milky Way wrappers around our galaxy poetic. Or a Pepsi-Cola bottling plant under the light of Denebola. Man can go wherever he wants now. There are poets, painters, sculptors, musicians, composers, writers, dancers, actors, and plain ordinary men scattered throughout the universe.

I don't know where the transmitters came from. No one I knew did. One day they just appeared, free, for everyone and anyone to use. Some said they were a Communist plot, or a capitalist plot, or the invention of some mad evil genius, or some kind of General Motors advertising gimmick. Peter Allison claimed they were left in the night by alien creatures who want Earth for themselves. Dylan said they were left by fairies.

It didn't matter. People used them anyway. They all left, everyone, at first in twos, then in droves, then by the millions, the poor, the rich, the honest, the criminal. Everybody went out into the universe, leaving me alone to tend the store. I mean everybody! Literally.

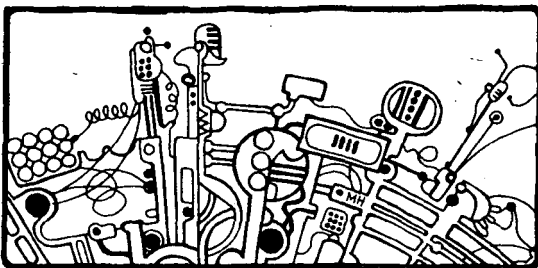
(Continued on page 123)

**AMAZING**

# **the Science**

**GREG BENFORD  
& DAVID BOOK**

**...in Science  
Fiction**



## **THE SCIENTIST IN SCIENCE FICTION**

IN A FAIR NUMBER of sf stories, a character appears labelled "scientist." When you stop to think about it, he doesn't need to be there, any more than a historical novel has to have a historian in it. That's because sf isn't really about science; it's about people living in the world of the future. (I won't insist on this as a definition. Obviously, it wasn't true in Gernsback's day, and it isn't absolutely true now, but it's mostly right.)

There really is little point in writing science-fiction about scientists. The only thing they do better than other people is science; in other respects they're a pretty ordinary bunch. The results and implications of scientific research are exciting, but—to an outsider looking in—the *doing* is completely blah. It lacks entertainment value. To put it another way: football players have fans, actors have fans, even politicians have fans—but there are no fan clubs for biologists or oceanographers.

Yet sf writers persist. Perhaps they feel the readers' naive enthusiasm for a good story can be made the excuse for any distortion of reality. Perhaps they are keenly aware of the important consequences the results of scientific research have for our daily lives. So they lard their fiction heavily with message, thereby encroaching on territory properly reserved to editors and columnists.

Two sorts of writers try to describe

scientists in their stories: those who know something about real-life scientists and those who don't. The former group, of course, includes a number of people who do scientific research for a living (or did formerly)—Fred Hoyle, Greg Benford, "J.J. Coupling" (John R. Pierce), G. Harry Stein, Isaac Asimov, for example. These writers are able to draw on their own experience. For the most part, they play down the details in picturing scientists at work. This leaves both reader and author free to concentrate undisturbed on the juicier elements of the story.

Strangely enough, most of the characterizations of scientists in sf roll off type-writers pounded by writers of the second group. Maybe it's not so strange, since they're so much more numerous than the others. It is to them—and their readers—that I wish to address myself. I am going to try to describe in what sort of setting research is really carried out, and show how they err in glamorizing it.

The first question you ought to ask is, why glamorize it anyway? Why not just tell it like it is? After all, physicists find research absorbing and even exciting. Why wouldn't an account of what we in the business do convey this excitement to the reader?

The answer, I believe, has something to do with what art is all about. Art seeks to crystallize human experience and communicate it in terms understandable

## **THE SCIENCE IN SCIENCE FICTION**

**91**

to humanity in general. The techniques used to carry on scholarly research of any kind are so internalized, so ill-defined, and usually involve such esoteric knowledge for their application that translating them into artistic terms is well-nigh impossible. But merely picturing the way a researcher looks when he's doing research misses the point. It omits the Creative Process. It's either confusing and dull, or it's hokey.

Let me try to illustrate this with the following fictionalized account of physicists solving a problem:

"Let's get down to cases. Where do we stand?"

He ran a hand through his hair and chewed his lip. "Up against a stone wall, I think. Nothing we've tried so far seems to offer any promise."

"The problem seems to be essentially one of confining radiant energy to the visible band of frequency."

"You make it sound so simple, bright eyes."

"Stow the sarcasm. That is, nevertheless, where the loss comes in with ordinary electric light. The filament is white hot, maybe two percent of the power is turned into light, the rest goes into infra-red and ultra-violet."

"So beautiful. So true."

"Pay attention, you big ape. I know you're tired, but listen to mama. There should be some way of sharply tuning the wave length. How about the way they do it in radio?"

He perked up a little. "Wouldn't apply to the case. Even if you could manage to work out an inductance-capacitance circuit with a natural resonant frequency within the visual band, it would require too much gear for each lighting unit, and if it got out of tune, it wouldn't give any light at all."

"Is that the only way frequency is controlled?"

"Yes—well, practically. Some transmitting stations, especially amateurs, use a specially

cut quartz crystal that has a natural frequency of its own to control wave length."

"Then why can't we cut a crystal that would have a natural frequency in the octave of visible light?"

He sat up very straight. "Great Scott, kid!—I think you've hit it."

That's enough to give you the idea. It moves along pretty nicely, I think. Drs. Martin and Douglas are batting ideas back and forth, and all of a sudden they get a brainstorm. Presto—the Douglas-Martin power generators are on the way.

In case you didn't recognize it from the dialog (I'll come back to that later), the passage quoted is by Robert Heinlein. It's from a 1940 Future History story, "Let There Be Light." The scene takes up a page and a half and lasts perhaps five minutes. We learn from the story, however, that the entire research program lasted six months. How was the rest of this time spent? You can bet that breakthroughs didn't come that easily all the time. It would have raised hell with the pace of the story though; if Heinlein had dwelled for long on those slack periods.

To illustrate my thesis, I have composed a brief example. It describes a more representative moment in the history of the project:

Archie Douglas scratched his head. He examined the equation carefully, then rewrote it in dimensionless form. Grouping terms in even powers of  $x$ , he observed to his joy that they could be arranged to yield the Taylor expansion of the cosine. The odd terms, however, resembled nothing under the sun. Baffled, he stared at the mess.

A quarter of an hour passed. Finally, Douglas pushed his chair away from the desk with a squeak of unoiled castors and stiffly stood up. Two strides carried him to the blackboard. He groped in the dusty chalk rack and came up with a stub of yellow chalk. Painstakingly he began differentiating

Gaussian, Lorentzian, and other single-humped distributions.

"Well," you say, stifling a yawn, "I'll come back when Archie is finished with his equation. Not too much happening right now." But you see, when he finishes with this equation, he's going to solve another. Or do something else equally flashy. There just isn't much to see when a real-life theoretical physicist is working.

But as you, the reader, know quite well, science is not just theory. The proof is in the pudding. The final test of all theory is experiment. So let's visit Archie and Mary Lou Martin at work in the laboratory.

At four AM they found the trouble. Too much sealant had been used on one of the observation ports of the vacuum vessel.

"Mary Lou," he asked, "has this ever happened before?"

"Yes, the time we put in the microwave diagnostics on the small tank. It's hard to find just the right amount to use."

Archie stood peering through the shadowy window. The vacuum pumps kept up their mindless rattling cough. Except for the gurgle of the liquid nitrogen Mary Lou was pouring out of a Dewar flask, there was no other sound. Finally he spoke. "We'll have to take those stainless steel liners out and bake them again. Maybe two hours at 200°."

Mary Lou finished with the Dewar before replying. "I think we're out of coffee," she said. "If we start this afternoon, we can have it back together by the weekend and get it pumped down again by Sunday." She walked over to the coffee pot and picked it up.

"I think we'll be able to get down to ten to the minus seven Torr now," Archie said. "In three more weeks we'll be taking data."

"There's just half a cup left," Mary Lou said. "Want some?"

Not much is going on here, either. But that's the way things really are, folks. Vast as the revolution science has wrought on

our lives is, the scope of ongoing research is extremely narrow. The scientist concerns himself with one simply posed (though possibly subtle) question at a time. That solved, he goes on to the next. Taken all together the answers may tell him something new or even revolutionary, but knowledge rarely advances by great leaps. It is perfectly commonplace for a scientist to spend three weeks solving an equation or achieving a sufficiently good vacuum to allow him to *begin* doing an experiment.

In the selection quoted from Heinlein, Martin delivers a little lecture on the inefficiency of the incandescent light, purely for the readers' benefit. This is necessary to explain what they're doing, but it's a compromise with plausibility. It doesn't ring true.

As I tried to show with my vignettes, what real-life physicists do and say is unlikely to be comprehensible to the general reader. Oh, it could be explained, all right, but who's going to sit still for forty or fifty pages or turgid exposition?

There's one other clear-cut difference between Heinlein's description and my version—the sprightly dialog employed in the former. It's easy to dismiss the point by saying that all Heinlein's characters talk that way (true). But few real physicists engage in such playful banter. Mostly they just talk about their equations and their machines when they're working. The effort of doing this leaves little time for horsing around.

So, in comparison with most fiction, a realistic account of scientific research is likely to seem tedious, murky, and lacking in the usual interplay of personalities. The conclusion I draw is that story-writers should steer away from the big scene where the hero smites his brow and cries: "Eureka!" Anyone acquainted with research (and most perceptive

readers who aren't) will feel that it's phoney.

What I've said so far sounds pretty negative. Even so, it's not going to dissuade sf writers reading this (if any) from writing about research scientists whenever they think the story calls for it. For their benefit I'll try to supply some useful positive advice to balance the negative.

First, anyone planning to write about research ought to visit a facility as much as possible like the one in the story before writing it. It isn't hard to arrange a visit. Most of the really gauche errors I've seen in sf characterizations of scientists would have been forestalled by this simple precaution.

Here's a case in point: "Problem for Emmy," a 1952 piece by Robert Sherman Townes, reprinted by Groff Conklin in *Science-Fiction Thinking Machines*—God knows why. It's a Literary item, but its literary worth is cheapened by implausibility. The author knows not whereof he speaks. It's like reading one of those stories of a half-century back, set in the American West, written by an English author who had never been west of Dorset.

Setting aside the names with their elephantine German puns (Dichter, Mannender and Golemacher) and the time-hallowed plot based on a computer spontaneously gaining consciousness, I can read it as a serious story. But the descriptions are vague right from the start:

The walls had been painted pale gray, and a few partitions and cubicles had been set up, but the shape and vast reach of the old armory remained unchanged. Emmy almost filled the width of one end, standing a good fifteen feet high and coming out into the Room over twenty feet to the edge of the heavy carpeting. To the casual eye Emmy was no more than several gray-enameled steel boxes with panels of tiny lights, a few switches, one large red light.

Nothing about the fluorescent lighting and air conditioning that constitute the most striking features of a computer room, two decades ago or now. Nothing about tape or card readers. The only input/output device Townes gives Emmy is a typewriter. And he insists on anthropomorphizing the machine: "Most of us who worked in the Room fell into the habit of thinking of Emmy as a person; a clever, reasonable, amiable person." Well, I have heard the routine known as the compiler, which translates instructions into machine language, referred to as "he." When people do this, though, they talk as if "he" were an imbecile with limited training, placed in the central processing unit by IBM to frustrate the designs of programmers.

"The Mathematicians arranged the data in the form of marks on a tape that fed into the machine." Nothing about programmed instructions. Nothing about how they actually made the marks. And there are the "breakdowns that could not be explained" (that's realistic), when "only a rest of a day or two would restore the machine to perfect working order." And to round out the picture, on undefined occasions (Machine errors? Programming errors?) "the error bell rang out sharply. The big red light flashed on and off hectically. *Error. Error.*"

I can't say much about any sort of research installation except physics labs, but I have seen a few of those. They don't fit most preconceptions. For one thing, they're noisy. They always seem to be located next door to a jet strip, and there's always some building construction going on or equipment being installed across the hall.

Many big labs—especially government labs—are on sites originally built for some other purpose. The Lawrence Radiation Laboratory in Livermore, California, for example, was built on an abandoned

World War II airfield. Greg Benford and I used to have offices in what had formerly been the unmarried officers' dormitory. Culham Laboratory in England is also sited on a former airfield. In Washington, D.C., each successive administration shuffles agencies around like a new football coach reorganizing a losing team. Last year's materials testing lab is this year's Bureau of Standards Computer Center, and so on.

Physicists spend most of their time in offices, not in laboratories. This is true even of experimentalists. A typical office isn't very big. It's got a lot of book shelves (but usually not enough), a desk and a couple of chairs, and a blackboard on the wall. Usually it's dusty and disorderly. Sometimes each person has his own room, sometimes there are several desks to an office. An open door policy prevails. Except for the top brass, people walk in and out all the time.

For the most part, they don't work quietly at their desks. They ask questions, they go around trying to borrow a copy of Watson's *Bessel Functions* or a dual-beam oscilloscope, they talk about what so-and-so is working on and what's wrong with the computer today. And sometimes they goof off and talk about football games, local schools, or the stock market. The overriding impression given by all this is that the social aspects of a laboratory play a bigger part in research than science textbooks ever hint.

See the two physicists standing over by the blackboard there, the bald one with the Austro-Hungarian accent and the shaggy one wearing glasses. They are arguing about the validity of an approximation. Fred, the shaggy one, made to simplify an equation. It is not a discussion, not the cool intellectual discourse of men of reason—it is an argument, full of shouting and gesticulation. While not everyone gets this passionate, such scenes

are very common. They are arguing over ideas. References to personalities play almost no part. This is not to say personality traits are unimportant, however. Observe the disputants carefully.

The bald man, Leo, is much the noisier of the two. He presses down with the chalk against the board so hard that it frequently breaks. He flaps his arms, shrugs, frowns. He writes and talks rapidly, frequently refuting what he himself was saying five minutes previously. He makes careless mistakes in every blackboard calculation, but repairs them with a swipe of the eraser. They aren't important—he is trying to capture the essence of the problem, the exact solution can come later. His hasty scrawl covers the board. And the instant the argument is over, he forgets there was any controversy. Then he speaks calmly and without a trace of his earlier combativeness.

Fred is totally different. He usually speaks in an even, almost monotonous voice. It is pitched so low that others in the same room have to strain to hear him—have to stop talking and listen, in fact. He never interrupts his mercurial colleague. He prefaces his utterances with "I think if we try this . . ." or "Leo, don't you see what will happen when . . ." One-upmanship. He never makes a forceful, positive assertion. But the effort of hewing to this low-key role under the present trying circumstances shows. He can't prove rigorously that his approximation is justified, so he has been reduced to a holding action. What he is saying amounts to a repeated invitation to "prove that I'm wrong." He is gradually beginning to raise his voice. His expression is becoming stubborn.

Suddenly Leo claims he knows how to refute the approximation. His idea is to solve a particularly simple test problem where they know what the answer should be. It turns out that only for one narrow



range of physical conditions does the approximation give the right answer. "There! You see," says Leo. "It's no good." "No," says Fred, "this is the most interesting case." "Nonsense! You've thrown all the long wave lengths out of the problem." But the controversy has resolved itself. Since the embattled approximation is not totally useless, it is acceptable.

The scene I have pictured can serve as a launching pad for Admonition No. 2: Give fictional scientists some character development. The mere label isn't enough. Scientists have the same variety of personalities as non-scientists. On the average, they're a little more intense, a little more closed, a little narrower in the interests they pursue actively. Eight years of higher education use up a lot of time that might otherwise be spent on fun and games. But there are research scientists whose free-wheeling sex lives would put travelling salesmen to shame, others who are consummate politicians and glory hounds, and still others whose real love is not research but flying or playing the piano.

Do they share any common motivations? I would say that two are nearly universal: a delight in solving problems, and ambition. I omit such widely proclaimed traits as the Love of Truth and the Desire to Improve the Lot of Mankind. I'm not being cynical—I just don't think they have any more to do with the way a scientist's mind works than they have with a lawyer's or a linotype operator's.

I don't have anything to say about problem-solving. Perhaps it's just a species of curiosity. Either you care about solving problems or you don't, and if not, science is a drag.

Everyone, however, has encountered ambition and understands it. In science the fulfillment of ambition is status—

becoming a full professor, director of research or advisor to the President, getting a law or effect named after yourself, becoming the acknowledged world expert on something. I never saw a single science textbook in school that said Einstein published his work on the photoelectric effect because he wanted to get a better job, or Oppenheimer agreed to head up the Manhattan project because he liked having a lot of people working under him. But that (or something close to it) must have been true. Every research group is its director's little empire, every graduate student is his professor's personal janissary. Winning the Nobel prize is the greatest ego-gratification a man can experience.

The best account I've seen of how science is done is James Watson's *Double Helix*. No-one could have written this without possessing first-hand experience, a keen mind, and incredible gall. Unhappily, most sf writers are denied the first qualification. Their characterizations must inevitably pale in comparison with those of Watson, the insider.

A notable exception is Fred Hoyle's better fiction. In *Ossian's Ride* he offered a prescription that is surely autobiographical. Thomas Sherwood, the protagonist, relates.

I noticed a curiously contradictory feature of these weekly scientific meetings. Anyone who could ask intelligent questions of the lecturer of the day gained great prestige. And if the lecturer made an error that one could correct, then better still. In spite of the reputation that could be won in this fashion, nobody took the trouble to prepare himself in advance—apart from the lecturer, of course. Nor was it at all difficult to prepare oneself, because the subjects of the meetings were always announced at least a week beforehand.

So in addition to my own work I deliberately began to read up carefully in advance

on all matter of topics. Sometimes the subjects were fairly mathematical. These were not only the easiest for me to cope with, but they were also the greatest prestige winners. I had more trouble with experimental physics and with chemical and biological topics. Yet a day or two's reading was usually sufficient to suggest several questions. The great thing was that nine out of ten of the audience would be following the lecturer only rather vaguely. Then if one could ask some rather precisely formulated question, the effect of a complete understanding was created.

I took up a position in the middle of the second row, leaving the front row for men of established reputation. It was astonishing how quickly the system took effect. Within a month the high and mighty were looking at me with averted vision. Within two months they were nodding openly. Within three months I had a recognized seat in the front row.

A little ruthless, maybe? Hoyle could have gone on to add some more advice in the same vein:

(1) Publish everything you can. Publish your brilliant work, publish your lousy work, publish your scratch work, publish your toilet paper. Rewrite each paper and publish it in several journals—as a brief research letter, as a full-length article, as a chapter in someone's book. (Sf writers know all about this technique already.)

(2) If you happen not to have been the first to discover a new method of solving a problem, be the first in your field to use it, or the first in your lab. Be eclectic. Read the journals and attend seminars with one question constantly in mind: what is the easiest thing along these lines that can be done that *this* guy hasn't done yet? Then do it before he does.

(3) Walk up and down the corridors listening. If the talk in one of the offices sounds

interesting, walk in. Join the conversation. Think of something the others haven't said yet. Say it. When the article comes out, you'll be a coauthor.

(4) If you get hold of something good, ride it for all you're worth. Spend ten years at it. Publish all the variations on the theme, all the conceivable applications. Write books about it. Become an eponym.

(5) Talk up your own work. Praise it, cite it, give seminars on it. Buttonhole officers of contracting (funding) agencies like NASA, AEC, and NSF at annual meetings and tell them how good it is. Send press releases to the *New York Times*. Again, Harlan Ellison understands this technique as well as anyone in the world today.

(6) Beat the bushes for the best graduate students, programmers, technicians, etc. Kidnapping is out of the question, but anything short of it goes. A good assistant will not only do most of the work, he will generate ideas. If he goes on to achieve renown he will add luster to his boss's reputation.

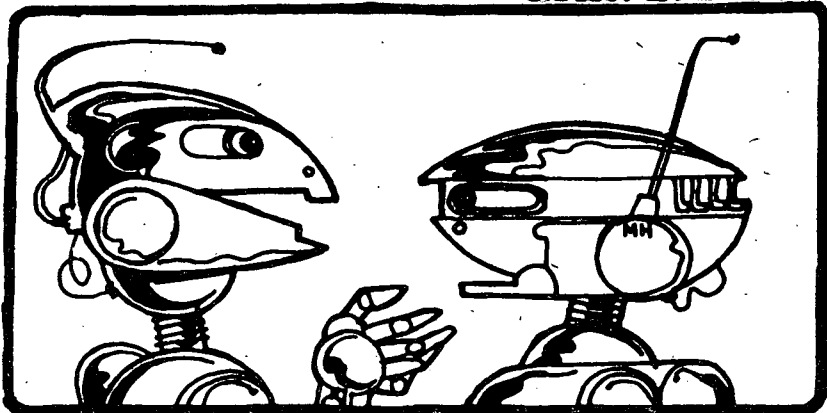
I don't mean to imply that these principles are particularly Hoyle's, or are associated with his name. They're common practice with everyone who does research. Indeed, readers of Potter, Parkinson and Peter will recognize all of them as universal. I've said it before, I'll say it again—scientists are pretty much like anyone else.

If my space weren't all used up, I'd go on to talk about the scientist-figures in something a little more recent; maybe from a *Competing Magazine* (in case I should happen to find fault with anything). What I'd really like to see is a novelization of the *Phys Biz*, with all characters drawn from life. And no big red lights flashing on and off hectically, saying *Error, Error*.

Maybe I can talk Greg into writing it.

—DAVID L. BOOK





## \* THE CLUBHOUSE

This is the first installment of *The Club House* that I've written in a year. The reasons were two fold: first one column was squeezed out of two issues in a row, then I left the country for six months in France, where I didn't try to keep up on current fanzines and had no intention of writing a review column. But all this is over now, and with luck this column will be appearing regularly again.

In case any of you have forgotten, this is a column of reviews of fanzines, the amateur magazines published by science fiction fans. These fanzines are published as a hobby, not a business, and they are often ephemeral, so don't be too annoyed if an editor fails to answer your letter or send you anything for your sticky quarter as soon as you send it. Remember, all this is done in people's spare time, generally for love, not for money.

Fandom is, after all, just a goddam hobby.

POTLATCH #3-5, June, July, and September, 1971; 35¢ (no subscriptions); monthly, from Joyce Katz, 59 Livingston

St., Apt. 6B, Brooklyn, NY 11201; 30 pp. each, mimeographed.

"GNOMES IN MY POCKETS!" says the cover, "Captain Kangaroo Freaks Out . . ." "ASTROLOGICAL BIRTH CONTROL, A New Scientific Breakthrough!" Up in the corner there's a banner, "Special Psychic Issue," and the whole thing looks like one of those psychic-phenomena magazines. But it's not; it's just another of Jay Kinney's covers for *Potlatch*, which is one of the finest fanzines being published. It is only one of a number of fanzines currently appearing from hyper-active Brooklyn fandom, of which *Potlatch* is probably the best (although Joyce gets stiff competition from her husband Arnie and his monthly fanzine, *Focal Point*). The volume of fan activity from Brooklyn has increased tremendously through the year, so much so that other faneditors must feel somewhat overwhelmed at the sheer quantity of good stuff pouring out of New York. (Or else they become spiteful; which has happened in several cases where silly arguments about "fannishness" have developed.)

Because all the participants in this furious fan activity contribute to each other's fanzines, there is sometimes a hint of interchangeability among them, so it's important to notice the distinguishing features of each. For they are indeed quite different. The guiding light of *Potlatch* is Joyce herself; before all else the fanzine is a personal one, and some of the most interesting writing in it is Joyce's tales or musings on her life since the last issue. Her style is clear and fluid, giving you the impression that her thoughts are reaching the paper with very little distortion. You don't often notice brilliant tricks of style; in fact, you don't notice the writing at all, just the content, and that's a form of excellence. The best piece of writing in all these issues is Joyce's nostalgic portrait, in the fifth issue, of her childhood on a farm. Each issue, though, has its editorial, in #4 a long one about Joyce's marriage to Arnie, in #6 a short one about this year's world convention.

Arnie is also present in all issues, with his column, "The Golden Bagel." Now Arnie Katz is one of fandom's better fanwriters, but his approach sometimes puts me off. His favorite mode is the schtick; that is, taking an amusing idea and expanding on it, following it to its logical conclusion. Playing it through. I'm afraid I prefer the understatement. Arnie has a tendency to write out several paragraphs on an idea I would rather have seen condensed into one sentence or two, with the rest implied. Arnie's style is embellishment, stating what he has to say in often complicated sentences indulging in decorated sarcasm. I imagine much of this comes from the techniques of verbal story-telling; a funny story told at a party comes out this way naturally. I prefer a clearer, more straightforward style. But Arnie is certainly skilled in the style of writing he chooses to do, as you can see in this dialog from his column in *Potlatch* #6:

"One of the most unusual fannish traditions is that every time Steve Stiles enters a room, people clap.

"How did it start," Jerry Kaufman asked me at a recent Fanoclast meeting, after a thunderous round of applause had greeted Steve's entrance into the apartment as he came home from work."

"Originally they clapped for Bhub Stewart," I explained.

"Why was that?"

"Well, Bhub was a great comedian, and as he entered the doorway, he would usually do some inimitable Bhub Stewart schtick. He could put his foot behind his head, you know." Jerry nodded, impressed.

"Then Steve moved in with Bhub, and Bhub kind of stopped coming to meetings. So we applauded for Steve. After a while Steve was drafted."

"And did you stop clapping?" Jerry asked.

"No, by that time, clapping for people was part of the Fanoclast mystique. So we started to clap for John Benson. Not only did he once room with Steve Stiles, but he could put his foot behind his head even better than Bhub. He could do it standing up, hopping around on his other foot like a hysterical crane."

"Well, that makes sense," Jerry said.

"We were very pleased at the time, since it tied up a lot of loose ends."

"But now you clap for Steve again."

"Oh, yes, when Steve came back, we naturally resumed clapping for him. John was just keeping clapping alive until Steve could come home from trained killer school."

"Joyce, who had been listening quietly all this time, looked up. 'And what happened to John Benson?'"

"Well, we couldn't clap for two people; that would have been overdoing it. So we stopped clapping for John.' I hadn't thought of the old days of the Fanoclasts for a while, and my mind

drifted off to dwell upon them. "You know, John stopped coming to meetings after a while."

"'Poor John Benson,' Joyce said. 'All of a sudden, people stopped clapping for him. He must have felt very strange.'"

The other main continuing feature in *Potlatch* is Terry Carr's column of reprints from long-gone fanzines, "Entropy Reprints." This column appears simultaneously in a great number of fanzines, but it started here. (Running a column in more than one fanzine at the same time is unusual practice, but in this case it makes good sense; it simply allows Terry to get more good but forgotten material back in print.) The format of the column is that Terry does a page or so of introductory stuff, then follows the reprinted article or story or whatever. Sometimes it is short, other times it is long. Terry seems to devote a certain amount of thought to seeing that the pieces he reprints fit easily into the fanzines they are resurrected in. And his choice of reprints has been, on the whole, excellent. *Potlatch's* readership is a fan-nishly knowledgeable one, so "Entropy Reprints" has here featured very fannish stuff. In *Potlatch* #4 Terry presented "The Daring Young Fan with the Three-Speed Mimeo." In Terry's words, "The story is a parody of William Saroyan's short story 'The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze,' one of those wistful, arty little stories about death that were once in fashion. Transposed into fannish terms, the story is seen as a double-edged satire: not only on Saroyan's artiness, but also on fandom's way-of-life earnestness." The author was "Carl Brandon," who in fact never existed. Carl was a black ax fan, an imaginary fan thought up by the San Francisco fans of the mid-1950's (of which Terry was one), and of all the hoaxes in the history of fandom, Carl Brandon was the most successful.

He was not only regarded as real for over two years, he was also one of the best fanwriters of his time. Most of his work was in this parody line, parodies which became known as "brandonizations." A great number of them were written by Terry Carr; some were collaborations; the one reprinted here was done by Boob Stewart (who is not to be confused with the Bhub Stewart mentioned above; you can see why they both chose to spell their names eccentrically).

In *Potlatch* #6 the Entropy Reprint is some of the fantastic ravings of Claude Degler, a sick but flashy fan of the 1940's who has become almost legendary for his grandiose dreams. But in *Potlatch* #5, Terry reprinted some of the editorial columns written by Pete Graham for *Void* and *Lighthouse*, both of which Terry co-edited. Pete's "West Coast Jass" is a beautiful example of the kind of humor writing known during the early sixties as "chitterchatter": very light, witty patter, hopping from subject to subject with a deft touch. If I quote a bit of this for you, it fits in with what I was saying before about fanwriting, and you'll have something to compare with the quote from Arnie Katz.

"And last issue of *Void* Ted had called me the 'bon vivant of fandom'; this was a propos of my saying to him once that my problem in writing for fandom arose from the contradiction that while I come from Fabulous Berkeley Fandom, I am really a very serious person. In other words, a stodge. Ted and Terry don't accept this."

"Just the other night, though, I proved it to them. There was a big Fanoclast meeting—you remember the Fanoclasts; that's the club that talks about Earl Kemp all the time—which was mostly a party. In the middle of the party, which was held in Ted's basement office in the Village, a fan who had gone out for Pepsis

and mainly beer came back in followed closely by six other people whom nobody knew. They were, in a word, Mundane, and more than that—another word—they were Square. All six of them, just Square as hell.

“Bhob Stewart at this point was holding up the ceiling for Larry Ivie. (He did not have his foot behind his head. Terry Carr has wanted to see Bhob Stewart put his foot behind his head, but Bhob has steadfastly refused. ‘I have stopped,’ was about the way he put it, ‘for the duration. The duration being mainly that until I hear Burbee tell the watermelon story, which I have never heard, I am never again going to put my foot behind my head.’ Ted thinks we should leave it at that, considering that in this case Terry’s loss may well be fandom’s gain, but Terry is adamant about seeing the trick. I think he wants to teach it to Burbee, though I can’t quite understand why he wants to see Burbee telling the watermelon story with his foot behind his ear. But I digress.) Actually Bhob was just touching the ceiling at this point for some mundane reason—he is a Plaster Fan, and was describing this particular make and texture for the benefit of Bob Silverberg—but this struck my fancy. So after making the acquaintance of one of the Squares, George by name, I led him over to Bhob. Stewart had just got to Crackle-Finish at that point, and Silverberg seemed relieved when I told George to take over for Bhob and hold up the ceiling. George stood on the chair and did so. I mixed with my fine fannish friends then for a few moments, and then went over to the Squares again, who were being talked to by Lupoff and a couple of others. I went over to George’s girlfriend, who hadn’t noticed his absence yet, being both Square and like mainly Drunk, and I said, ‘Suzie, you’d better take care of George. He thinks he’s holding up the ceiling.’

‘Oh my god!’ she said, and rushed over and got him and they all began to rush out with much argument and gesticulation. I went out with them, told them I had just wandered in there too and didn’t know who all those crazy Buck Rogers types were either and weren’t they a bunch of nuts, and we all agreed and walked around the block and they bought me a few drinks but that’s all another story.”

Now that’s good fanwriting.

I’ve hardly left room to talk about the rest of *Potlatch*. Obviously the standard of writing quality is pretty high all the way through. Besides what I’ve mentioned, there has been a column by Bob Tucker that appeared in #5 and #6, in which he does some fairly straightforward commentary in his ironic style about various aspects of fandom today; a long, pleasant column in diary form by Bill Kunkel (in #6) in which he muses on this and that; and a long, humorous fannish fantasy in the same issue by newcomer Rick Stoker. Each issue has a meaty lettercolumn, one of the most active in any current fanzine. The whole of *Potlatch* is enjoyable, entertaining reading, and it is modestly but attractively decorated with the ubiquitous cartoons by Jay Kinney, drawn to suit and very funny, and with more cartoons by Ross Chamberlain, Steve Stiles, Bill Rotsler, and others. *Highly Recommended*.

THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR, June, 1971; \$1; from Arnie Katz, 59 Livingston St., Apt. 6B, Brooklyn, NY 11201; 42 pp., mimeographed.

This is an old fannish classic, reissued now in its third edition. In 1954, Walt Willis and Bob Shaw wrote and issued “The Enchanted Duplicator, a long humorous allegory about the journey of Jophan (Joe Fan) through the various stages of fannish development (The Jungle of Inexperience, The Desert of Indif-

ference, The Canyon of Criticism, etc.) to the Tower of Trufandom, where he will find the Enchanted Duplicator and publish the Perfect Fanzine. In the course of relating Jophan's story, Willis and Shaw made allegorical comments on all the sorts of people and activities found in fandom of their day; they wove all of fandom into a myth that captivated the minds of the fans who read it and made it an instant classic. When you feel cynical about fandom, rereading "The Enchanted Duplicator" is liable to reawaken your flagging enthusiasm and to remind you of the best in fandom.

There was a second edition, published by Ted Johnstone and George Fields in Los Angeles in 1962. Both editions have long since been sold out, so that a new one was certainly in order. Arnie Katz and Rich Brown, with the help of other New York fans, took on the task and finally issued this new *Enchanted Duplicator* last June. There are still quite a few copies left, and they are worth it for the excellent Ross Chamberlain illustrations alone. If you have a basic familiarity with fandom (enough to understand the general story), you should read this. *Highly Recommended.*

OUTWORLDS #6-8, winter, spring, & June, 1971; \$3.00 for the four 1971 issues (#7-10, theoretically); irregular, from Bill & Joan Bowers, PO Box 87, Barber-ton, Ohio 44203; 32, 50, and 40 pp., respectively, #6 offset, the others mimeographed.

*Outworlds* is well-known in fandom as a planned fanzine: the art, the layout, the text, everything is carefully put together by Bill Bowers in order to get the effect he wants. This does not mean that it is an exclusively "art" fanzine, although some fans take it that way; in fact, the latest issue contains no art at all. What

it does mean is that this fanzine is pretentious.

The trouble with *Outworlds*—and there is one—is that Bowers and his letter-writers talk too much about the format of the fanzine; they talk entirely too much about how experimental *Outworlds* is. This would be completely unforgivable if the fanzine were devoid of experiment, but in fact Bill has, indeed, experimented with each issue. I can only fault him for talking about it too much.

*Outworlds* is not always a successful experiment, but sometimes it is. #6 is, to my mind, the best issue in terms of format, although most of the readers (or at least of those who commented) seemed to feel it was too cold and formal. What Bill did with this issue was to print it offset—which upsets many fans who claim that it lacks the warm casualness and informality of mimeo—and to turn the issue on its side, so that you read most of it held like a scroll, your eyes running from top to bottom of a two-page spread. This is very effective, and in fact it's easier on the eyes, which prefer to read a line of print that's flat, not one that curves away between the staples in the center of the magazine. For the most part the art is balanced imaginatively with the blocks and columns of type. In this issue, Bill starts using a technique in Greg Benford's column, which is all made up of short paragraphs and snippets, of doing each section in a different but harmonizing typeface. It works well.

#7 is back to the more usual mimeographed form, the text all rightside-up and so forth, but there's a great deal of playing around with the layout, using boxes around bits of art and no large lettering for titles, only typing. The effects are nice, and what's more the whole thing reads like a magazine, not like an art scrapbook as a visually-oriented fanzine can. There are nice touches, such as put-



ting the opening section of Greg Benford's column on a separate page, set off by art; unfortunately there are goofs, too, such as the same technique applied to Sandra Miesel's article, where the last paragraph is continuous with the rest and is also full of book titles in a bold typeface, which makes the whole thing look choppy. The quality of the artwork itself in this issue is especially good.

#8 is a failure. There is no artwork, but the article titles are all done with a lettering-guide, which eliminates the confusion of the previous issue. This puts the emphasis on the text, which is fine, and indeed there are some nice layouts, but too many just look choppy. A blending of the styles of this issue and the last would have been better. #8 does introduce another innovation, in that the lettercolumn is published as a separately-bound supplement.

The written content of these issues tends to be better, the more recent the issue. The quality varies wildly, but there is a constant direction to Bowers' choice of material. It seems to me that this direction is an emphasis on getting each contributor to express a bit of his universe, to show some of his concerns, if not vital ones then at least concerns of some sort. A good deal of it takes the form of serious discussion. The lettercolumn takes this form, and can be fascinating. Ted Pauls' regular column of book reviews fits the mold, of course, and I must say that if you're going to revere a writer of innumerable, ubiquitous reviews of the current sf output, Ted Pauls makes a better man for the job than Richard Delap, who was getting all the praise last year. Pauls writes an interesting review, although his writing style is too verbose.

The purest form of serious discussion is to be found in Sandra Miesel's writing, of which a fine example is her analysis of the symbols in Delany's *Nova*, in *Out-*

*worlds* 7. Sandra is scholarly and learned, but she is never dry in her writing, unless you find *any* serious discussion on a complex level to be dry. I think that she enriches the current fanzine field.

On a less intense level, the best piece of discussion in these issues is "Understandings," in #8, the first installment of what is to be a column by Robert A. W. Lowndes. He spends nearly twelve pages discoursing on science fiction, starting with the hoary old question of a definition for sf and making this subject come alive; Lowndes is truly a contributor to be treasured, for he writes urbanely, calmly, insightfully. I imagine one could read him for hours, no matter what the subject.

There is a conspicuous failure in the line of serious discussion, though. Steve Fabian, who is a well-known fan artist, has here two installments of a column ostensibly talking about art in fanzines and science fiction. All of a sudden such columns have become a staple of fanzine contents. A year or more ago, it was no exaggeration when a few fan artists complained that no one ever commented on artwork in their long letters of comment. Since 1967 or so, art has played an increasingly important place in fandom, to the extent that now many fans judge fanzines on their appearance and not their content; it's not surprising that the times would catch up with themselves and that articles on fan art should start appearing. A couple of years ago the only columns about fan art, or sf art, were long, entertaining and informative rambles by Jack Gaughan, but lately all kinds of artists have sat down at the typewriter to express themselves in words about their work. Not all of these articles are worth it. The subject has by now acquired a set of clichés, and Fabian repeats most of them. Oh, I'm sure he means them sincerely, and it's quite possible he doesn't

realize they are clichés, but they are. His first column, called an introduction, is entirely Steve talking about what he's going to talk about; the only original insight I can see is his observation that fan art is *not* an ignored subject any longer, which I believe he is the first to say in print. It's ironic that he should say it in yet another fan art article. The second installment has the same quotient of new ideas: one, a warning that it's not always such a good idea to be striving for newness and uniqueness in art, that an artist should not be faulted for not being avant garde. (I suppose this is not a surprising remark to come from a more traditionally-oriented artist like Steve Fabian.) The column is still half clichés, but the second half is entertaining. It just isn't worth it.

There's a lot of other stuff in these issues, such as a good personal column by Poul Anderson, and short pieces, both light and heavy; by any number of people. There is just one other thing that needs mention: Greg Benford's regular column, "Thoughts While Typing." Greg is without a doubt one of the best writers in fandom, and one of the least-recognized (outside of a small circle of friends). He has written a lot in the past year, but it's been scattered through too many fanzines and the effect has been dissipated. Nobody notices, it seems. The most regular place that Greg's writing has appeared has been *Outworlds*, where in fact it doesn't particularly fit. You don't get the feeling that "Thoughts While Typing" is an integral part of the fanzine; it could just as well have appeared somewhere else, and you tend to think of it just as lagniappe, as something extra tacked onto the fanzine. That's unfortunate. Greg writes perfect little snatches of humor, often biting, always sparse and concise. (Steve Fabian should take lessons from Greg Benford in conciseness.) Each piece

is finely wrought and a gem to read. As well as humor, Greg writes observations—and they are often original—on the world around him, including the world of professional physicists, of which he is one. Each of Greg's columns is a scrapbook, but a brilliant scrapbook, one of the best.

*Outworlds* could use more Greg Benfords; it has an interesting package, but needs a consistently higher quality content. Nonetheless, *Recommended*.

#### *Other Fanzines:*

As usual, there are far too many fanzines to review at length. I hope I've included all the fanzines that have reached me in the months between columns. The fanzines marked with an asterisk (\*) are especially recommended.

\**FOCAL POINT* vol. 3, #1-3, July, August, Oct., 1971; 3/\$1; monthly, from Arnie Katz, 59 Livingston St., Apt. 6B, Brooklyn, NY 11201; 30, 34, and 28 pp., respectively, mimeographed. No longer a news fanzine, vying with *Potlatch* as the best fanish fanzine currently published.

\**RATS!* #9-12, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., 1971; 3/\$1, 6/\$2; monthly, from Bill Kunkel, 72-41 61st St., Glendale, NY 11227, and Charlene Komar; 20, 24, 24, 30 pp., respectively, mimeographed. Also fanish but distinctly personal.

\**ENERGUMEN* #5-8, Feb., Apr., Apr., June, 1971; 50¢ (*no checks or American stamps*); "nominally quarterly," from Mike and Susan Glicksohn, 32 Maynard St., Apt. 205, Toronto-150, Ont., CANADA; 42, 48, 40, and 56 pp., respectively, plus supplements sometimes, mimeographed. A wide-ranging general fanzine, and the heart of Canadian fandom. Also included with #5 is *ASPIDISTRA* #1, published by Susan, as a separate fanzine of serious discussion.

\**BEABOHEMA* #15-7, Apr., June, Aug.,

1971; 50¢; irregular, from Frank Lunney, 212 Juniper St., Quakertown, PA 18951; 48, 46, and 36 pp., respectively, mimeographed.

\*GRANFALLOON #12-3, May, Aug., 1971; 60¢, 4/\$2; irregular, from Linda E. Bushyager, 111 MacDade Blvd., Apt. B211, Sutton Arms, Folsom, PA 19033; 54 and 62 pp., respectively, mimeographed.

\*CROSSROADS #12, July, 1970; 50¢ 3/\$1; irregular, from Al Snider, Box 2319, Brown Sta., Providence, RI 02912; 36 pp., mimeographed. The fanzine of the Brown University SF Union.

\*LOCUS #96-8, Sept., Oct., 1971; 12/\$3, 26/\$6; "weekly/bi-weekly," from Charlie and Dena Brown, 2078 Anthony Ave., Bronx, NY 10457; 10, 6, 8, and 8 pp., respectively, plus inserts, mimeographed. The newszine that covers fandom; the best one, since *Focal Point* ceased to be a newszine. There are several overseas agents and foreign subscription rates; write and ask.

\*CHECKPOINT #7-9, Aug., Sept., 1971; 4/20p (1st class), 5/20p (2nd class and Europe), 6/\$1 (foreign airmail); bi-weekly, from Peter Roberts, The Hawthorns, Keele, Staffs., GREAT BRITAIN; 6, 6, and 2 pp., respectively, mimeographed. The newszine for British fandom.

EGG #4, no date, 1971; 3/-, 4 for 10/-, or 35¢, 3/\$1 (or 70¢, 8/\$5 airmail); irregular, from Peter Roberts, 87 West Town Lane, Bristol, BS4 5DZ, UNITED KINGDOM (USAgent: Ed Reed, 668 Westover Rd., Stamford, CT 06902); 34 pp., mimeographed. Peter seems to use both this address and the one listed for *Checkpoint*; I'm not sure when he's where.

SANDWORM #13-4, spring, summer, 1971; 50¢ or 6 eight-cent stamps (unused); irregular, from Bob Vardeman, PO Box 11352, Albuquerque, NM 87112; 30 and 26 pp., respectively, mimeographed.

EPILOGUE #3-4, no date, 1971; 40¢;

quarterly, from George Jennings, 7605 Sandra, Little Rock, Arkansas 72209; 30 and 32 pp., respectively, mimeographed. "This publication is devoted to the hobby of collecting and preserving network radio programs of the near past." It does so with humor and elan.

TOMORROW AND... #6, summer, 1971; 50¢, 5/\$2; irregular, from Jerry Lapidus, 54 Clearview Dr., Pittsford, NY 14534; 28 pp., offset in a sideways format. The fanzine of the Syracuse SF Society.

DALLASCON BULLETIN #8-10, no date, 1971; 4/\$1; quarterly, from Larry Herndon and Joe Bob Williams, PO Box 34305, Dallas, Texas 75234; 46, 32, and 40 pp., respectively, offset. Formerly the official organ of the bid for Dallas in '73 for the worldcon, but continuing after the bid has folded. [*The title has now become NOSTALGIA NEWS-TW*] Circulation of over 6000 copies; excellent for advertising.

ASHWING #7-8, March, July, 1971; no price listed; "published sometimes," from Frank Denton, 14654 8th Ave. SW, Seattle, WA 98166; 60 and 48 pp., respectively, mimeographed.

WYRD #11, Feb., 1971; 25¢, 4/\$1; bi-monthly, from Leo Wagner, Box 82, Colon, MI 49040; 22 pp., mimeographed.

OSFAN #15, Jan., 1971; no price listed; irregular, from Douglas O. Clark, 6218½ Hancock Ave., St. Louis, MO 63139; 32 pp., mimeographed.

THE MENTOR #19, May/July, 1971; 3/\$1 (Australian or US); quarterly, from Ron L. Clarke, 78 Redgrave Rd., Normanhurst, NSW 2076, AUSTRALIA; 68 pp., mimeographed.

\*SF COMMENTARY #19, Jan.-Mar., 1971; 9/\$3 (or 9/\$8 airmail); irregular, from Bruce R. Gillespie, GPO Box 5195AA Melbourne, Victoria 3001, AUSTRALIA (USAgent: Charlie and Dena Brown, 2078 Anthony Ave., Bronx, NY 10457); 134 pp., mimeographed.

ORCRIST #5 c/w TOLKIEN JOURNAL vol. 4, #3, "1970-1971"; \$1; irregular, from Richard C. West, 614 Langdon St., Madison, Wisconsin 53703; 32 pp., offset. The Bulletin of the Univ. of Wisconsin JRR Tolkien Society.

MAYA #2, April, 1971; 10p; irregular, from Ian R. Williams, 6 Greta Terrace, Chester Road, Sunderland, SR4 7RD, Co. Durham, ENGLAND; 48 pp., mimeographed.

QWERTYUIOP #4, spring, 1971; 10 p or 25¢; irregular, from Samuel S. Long, Box 401, RAF Croughton, nr Brackley, Northants., UNITED KINGDOM (or APO NY 09378 for US readers); 48 pp., mimeographed.

\*QUICKSILVER #1-2, Dec., 1970, and April, 1971; 10p, 6/50p, or 40¢, 6/\$2; irregular, from Malcolm Edwards, 236, King's College, Cambridge, CB2 1ST, ENGLAND; 48 pp. each, mimeographed.

\*STARLING #17-8, Jan., April, 1971; 35¢, 3/\$1; quarterly, from Hank and Lesleigh Luttrell, 1108 Locust St., Columbia, MO 65201; 52 and 36 pp., respectively, mimeographed.

\*ALGOL #16, Jan., 1970; 75¢, 5/\$3; irregular, from Andy Porter, 55 Pineapple St., Apt. 3J, Brooklyn, NY 11201; 44 pp., offset. Excellent but very infrequent. #17 is about to be published.

INTERPLANETARY CORNCHIPS #6, May, 1971; 50¢ (subs up to 8 issues); "quarterly three times a year," from James E. McLeod, Jr., and Dale A. Goble, Jr., 9109 Kendrick Way, Orangevale, Calif. 95662; 56 pp., mimeographed.

XRYMPH #2, May, 1971; 25¢; three times a year, from Norman Hochberg and Louis Stathis, Benedict College, Rm. E-013, State Univ. of New York, Stony Brook, NY 11790; 42 pp., mimeographed. Sponsored by the Stony Brook SF Forum.

SOUTHERN FANDOM CONFEDERATION BULLETIN #2, June, 1971; \$1 annual dues; irregular, from Meade Frierson III,

3705 Woodvale Road, Birmingham, AL 35223; 28 pp., mimeographed. The SFC seems to be a new organization designed to stimulate Southern fandom; there is a 13-page roster of Southern fans, with addresses.

NOLAZINE #11, June, 1971; 50¢; irregular, from Rick and Lynne Norwood, 6002 Chef Menteur Hwy, Apt. 219, New Orleans, LA 70126; 52 pp., mimeographed.

PHANTASMAGORIA #1, summer, 1971; \$3; irregular, from Kenneth Smith, Box 2952, Westville Sta., New Haven, CT 06515 ("After August 15, 1971: address all mail to Box 20020-A, LSU Sta., Baton Rouge, LA 70803"); 40 pp., offset. A very elaborate magazine of illustrated fantasy.

AXOLOTL EXWARD #1, April, 1971; 50¢; irregular, from Gary S. Mattingly, 7529 Grandview Lane, Overland Park, Kansas 66204; 30 pp., offset.

STING #3, no date, 1971; 3/50p, 6/one pound, 12/two pounds, etc.; irregular, from Jane E. Hales and Ray Denton, 3 Collingwood Court, Collingwood Rise, Folkestone, Kent, ENGLAND; 40 pp., mimeographed.

REALM #4, July, 1971; 50¢, 4/\$2 (15¢ extra outside US and Canada); semi-yearly, from A. Edward Romero, 2000 N. Grant Ave., Springfield, MO 65803; 38 pp., offset.

\*SPECULATION #28, Jan., 1971; 3/-, 5 for 15/-, or 40¢, 5/\$2; irregular, from Peter R. Weston, 31 Pinewall Ave., Kings Norton, Birmingham 30, UNITED KINGDOM; 66 pp., mimeographed. Probably the best serious sf fanzine, and not always all that serious either.

GEGENSCHEIN #1, no date, 1971; 25¢ Australian; "about four times a year," from Eric B. Lindsay, 6 Hillcrest Ave., Faulconbridge, NSW 2776, AUSTRALIA; 26 pp., mimeographed.

ENTROPION #2, March, 1971; 30¢, 4/\$1; irregular, from Nick Shears, 52

Garden Way, Northcliff ext 4, Johannesburg, Transvaal, SOUTH AFRICA; 34 pp., mimeographed.

FOULER #6, June, 1971; no price listed; irregular, from Greg Pickersgill and Leroy Kettle, "The Pines," Haylett Lane, Merlins Bridge, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, UNITED KINGDOM; 34 pp., mimeographed. Lively and foul, full of piss-and-vinegar.

FORUM INTERNATIONAL #2, Nov., 1970; 2/\$1; irregular, from Per Insulan-der, Midsommarvägen 33, 126 35 Hagersten, SWEDEN; 50 pp., mimeographed. Something of an official English language Swedish fandom publication.

ASGARD #2, Oct., 1970; 5/\$1, 12/\$2; irregular, from the 34th World SF Convention Bidding Committee, Box 3273, S-103 65 Stockholm 3, SWEDEN; 6 pp., mimeographed. Boosting the bid for Stockholm in '76.

TRANSLATIONS #1, Nov., 1970; 4/\$2; irregular, from John-Henri Holmberg,

Norrskogsvägen 8, 112 64 Stockholm, SWEDEN; 54 pp., mimeographed.

CYNIC #2-3, winter, spring, 1971; "no established rate"; irregular, from A. Graham Boak, 6, Hawks Road, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey, 1KT 3EG, ENGLAND; 26 and 28 pp., mimeographed.

\*HAVERINGS #49, April/May, 1971; 6 for 8/- or \$1; bi-monthly, from Ethel Lindsay, Courage House, 6 Langley Ave., Surbiton, Surrey, UNITED KINGDOM; 12 pp., mimeographed. Ethel's comments on all the fanzines she receives; not a bad general checklist for a new fan.

One that I would mention, except that I'm not sure there will be any copies left, is SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #43, which is the final issue. Dick Geis has folded SFR because it was taking up too much of his time.

Send fanzines for review to John D. Berry, 625 Scott, #607, San Francisco, California 94117.

—JOHN D. BERRY

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### COMING IN June, No. 25 THRILLING SF (On Sale March 21)

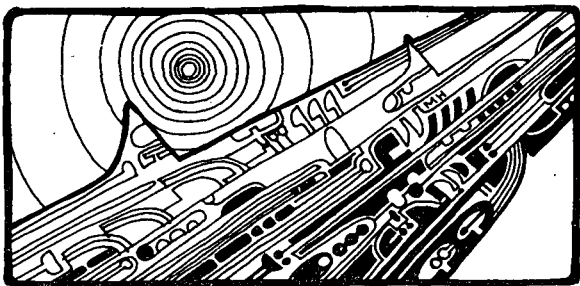
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### ON SALE IN JUNE FANTASTIC April 27

The conclusion of GORDON EKLUND's major NEW novel—**BEYOND THE RESURRECTION**.

# the Future in Books



Suzette Haden Elgin: *FURTHEST*. An Ace Science Fiction Special #25950, Ace Books, New York, 1971. Paperback, 191 pages, 75¢.

I finished reading this book in a state of bemusement. I was puzzled. Why, I wondered, had it been published in the prestigious Ace Specials line when it was so obviously a minor-grade novel of the sort which is swallowed up, two every month, by the Ace Doubles line? Why, indeed, to take this series of questions a step further, was it even written?

I felt cheated when I finished the book, because it remained unresolved on so many levels—and so poorly executed on all levels. I turned to my typewriter and began a review of it. My first line was this:

*Save your money.*

But however valuable that advice might be—and no matter if it makes any additional review redundant—it doesn't constitute valid criticism.

What follows, then, is an examination of a failure. Perhaps in looking more closely at such a failure, one may develop insight into the essential differences between a major novel (which *Furthest* has mild pretensions toward) and a minor one.

The protagonist is Coyote Jones. His name is never explained—not even in allusion. It is simply a funny hat: some-

thing which makes us sit up and take notice, and deludes us into thinking him unusual and remarkable in some way. He is an agent (one of the best, maybe even *the* best, we are told) for "the Tri-Galactic Intelligence Service." This service is apparently run by a man known only as "the Fish" (another funny hat) and Jones enjoys a relationship with him which was first described and defined (far, far better) by Erle Stanley Gardner (as "A.A. Fair") in his Donald Lamm-Bertha Cool series, some thirty years ago. That is, "the Fish" is fat and sexless and largely humorless, while Jones is amiable, highly sexed (in an apparently undiscriminating way) and given to sassing the boss. Gardner made it believable; Mrs. Elgin does not.

The Tri-Galactic Intelligence Service operates out of "Mars Central," for unexplained reasons, and serves three galaxies populated wholly by humans or quasi-human descendants of humanity. This is a comic-book notion and the stuff of most pot-boiler sf. Mrs. Elgin simply ignores the problems and contradictions implicit in this society and bulls on through with her story.

Saving minor digressions, the story takes place on *Furthest*—the farthest-out planet in three galaxies, can you dig it?—a planet which apparently has a sun (mention is made of night and day and sunlight every so often), but lacks any of the

other impedimenta usually found in solar systems. Its surface is one of gray rock carved into ribbons by water: there are streams everywhere, although where they come *from* and flow *to* is a moot point, despite the fact that we're told they have a strong current. Nothing—*nothing*—grows on the surface of the planet, but apparently the water supports many forms of life including (we find out later) at one time an indigenous non-human race of intelligent water-breathers. Ecologically, this planet is a disaster-area of unrelated phenomena: a few plot-handly devices held together with minimal rationalizing by the author.

Our hero has been permitted to land on the planet—and is the first off-worlder allowed to do so for an awfully long time. *Why* was he allowed to land? It's never said, but only one answer fits: because otherwise there would have been no story. Despite the fact that he is the *only* off-worlder on the planet, a large city and several towns have been erected and members of the aquatic race of natives are forced to go through endless charades of life in these above-ground constructs. *Why?* What do they do? The author never says and the hero never finds out.

The natives are the descendants of humans who interbred with the indigenous race—"children of the dolphins," they call themselves. Apparently their sole apparent physical difference from the rest of humanity is an inconspicuous set of gill-slits behind their ears. (They wear "ear muffs" over these when masquerading as surface-dwellers for our hero's benefit.) How they originally interbred is never specified. Like so much of this book, it is simply a "given," a "take my word for it, because otherwise I wouldn't have a story for you". When not pretending to be "normal" humans, they live underwater.

Our hero knows nothing of this: all he knows is that the people are very closed and uncommunicative and his job is to find out what makes them tick (I won't even tell you *why* he has to find out—it's too monumentally silly). What does he do? He sets up a "store" which deals in goods and services which are obviously totally alien to their ways. *Why?* Well, he is the top agent in the intelligence service, isn't he? So he must know what he's doing, mustn't he?

No.

If he hadn't fortuitously hired as an assistant a boy whose sister *just happened* to be the focal point of a major scandal resulting in the commission of a "religious crime," and if the boy hadn't, the day after he was hired, asked him to hide his sister for him, our hero would have left Furthest no wiser than when he came.

The sister turns out to be the key, you see. She's a rebel, doesn't believe in the system, and wants to overturn it. So she blabs it all to Our Hero. Convenient, eh?

That's the basic plot, and it betrays not one distinguishing iota of original thought. It could have been cobbled second-, third- or fourth-hand from any half dozen of the several hundred pot-boilers of intergalactic intrigue Ace has published over the past almost twenty years. The author has scooped up, undigested, all these comic-book devices, from the planet that houses a single small nation of people, to the handy galactic government which somehow manages to span *three* galaxies (and one gets the impression every habitable planet has its share of humanity in residence!), lumped them all together with the standard "undercover agent in hostile surroundings" plot device, and arrived at a very predictable book.

But this is an *Ace Special*. *Why?*

Well, for openers there are the standard quotes from future philosophical works



at the beginning of each chapter. Some are amusing and the rest are innocuous.

More important, the book has sex in it.

Yes, indeed. the hero says "shit" twice—and has to explain this ancient and archaic term each time since no one else in the book has ever heard the word. (Where did *he* hear it?)

He also says "fuck" at least once. These words were strictly taboo in the regular line of Ace Books—books edited for the sheltered adolescent—in which, indeed, an unmarried heroine has never been allowed to become pregnant. (In this book, she *does* become pregnant.)

We are first made aware that this will be a novel of, ahem, erotic realism, on page 92. At this point (a few weeks after his arrival on Furthest) Jones has been Without Sex for longer than ever before in his adult life, and it is literally driving him out of his mind. Pay no attention to the fact that he is here on serious business. Ignore the fact that the women are heavily clothed and unattractive to him and that he is never teased with sexual stimuli. "He was maimed, tormented, destroyed, a poor blind creature in a state of advanced rut . . . He ached all over, his body felt like a vast boil, he was a great deal too old and set in his ways to take up masturbation, and the idea that he was duty-bound to stay here and spend months more in this condition was too much."

It was at this point that I flung the book across the room, startling my wife, daughter and three cats, and shouted, "Crap!" loudly. Mrs. Elgin has obviously not the foggiest notion of male sexuality—despite being thirty-four, having a husband, four children, a B.A. in French, a M.A. in Linguistics, and a Ph.D. in Linguistics. She is also apparently unaware of basic physiology. Coyote Jones would have had nocturnal emissions be-

fore he reached this stage of torment—if the ancient manly art of masturbation was truly as unknown to him as she states. (It would be mere nit-picking to remark that nothing in the previous 91 pages has prepared us for this sudden surge of intimate revelations about Mr. Jones' character.)

But she has done it for a reason. It seems that his assistant's sister, the one he has been hiding for some days now, is a "mindwife."

The "Mindwife" is Mrs. Elgin's one original thought in the book, and it deserved better of her. The two pages of purple prose which follow Jones' agony of chastity are intended to describe sexual ecstasy, as the girl telepathically gives Jones a series of orgasms ("Unendurable pleasure indefinitely prolonged"?). They come out reading like the imaginings of a pre-adolescent girl who is still hung up on horses—and culminate in a wildly (but unintentionally) humorous scene in which Jones, covered with his own semen, rushes off to find the girl's brother.

There's more, but I tire of re-counting it. The book actually concludes with the birth of a daughter to Jones and the "mindwife" girl (with whom he has now had physical intercourse), after which she is executed for her crimes. Ah, pathos. Ah, phooey. Even the resolution is a fraud: Jones shows the people that they needn't continue their masquerade to fool the three galaxies—it's unnecessary—and makes his late mindwife over into a heroine for the masses. But her crime was to refuse to allow her talent to be prostituted—and this is conveniently forgotten by one and all.

Whenever the question of women writers writing about men comes up, I usually point to the obvious talents of women like Ursula K. LeGuin (of whose *Left Hand of Darkness* this book is a travesty), Leigh Brackett and Lee Hoffman. They

have written about men and women, sexual reality, and have betrayed no "feminine bias" or weakness.

Suzette Haden Elgin sabotages the whole issue. Only the "mindwife" girl comes to life in her book—and then only in her first scene—and her characterization of her male characters is an embarrassment.

*Save your money.*

—TED WHITE

Sam Moskowitz: *THE IMMORTAL STORM*. ASFO Press, Atlanta, 1954. 269 pp., hardcover, \$5.00.

Harry Warner, Jr.: *ALL OUR YESTERDAYS*. Advent: Publishers, Chicago, 1969. 336 pp., hardcover, \$7.50.

Recent publication of Harry Warner's fan history drove me to the shelf and my *n*th attempt to read Sam Moskowitz's earlier volume. This time I made it all the way through—even enjoyed it. *Why* will be apparent later.

*The Immortal Storm*—the title derives from a mundane novel of pre-Hitler's War vintage—originally appeared serially in *Fantasy Commentator* between 1945 and 1952. Seven years! It was then reissued as a mimeographed "book" by the Atlanta Science Fiction Organization, and finally as a hardcover book photo-offset from varityped pages. It was a huge, a monumental task.

In it, Moskowitz traced the history of sf fandom—not of science fiction itself, except as the two impinged upon each other, as in the sponsorship of captive fan clubs by science fiction magazines—from its somewhat misty beginnings in the late 1920s and early 30s, through the first World SF Convention in New York in 1939.

The book is full of familiar names and faces (there are many photos). It is written

in the bombastically-turgid style that has marked Moskowitz's writings from boyhood onward. And it is marked by blatantly slanted reporting, in which Moskowitz himself, Will Sykora, Jimmy Taurasi and their other associates—are portrayed in tones of glowing brightness while the villains—Michel, Wollheim, Blish, Dick Wilson and others—are portrayed as necessarily evil, stupid and deprived.

The main focus of the book is the struggle between two fan groups for prestige and influence in the fannish world, particularly for the privilege of putting on early conventions and the control of those gatherings. The "good guys" are the Sykora-Moskowitz axis, represented in the early years by the International Scientific Association and later by the International Scientific Association and later by a somewhat amorphous movement known as New Fandom.

The "bad guys" were the Futurians.

*All Our Yesterdays*, the first volume of a projected two- or three-book series by Harry Warner, is also based on many years of fanzine writing; Warner skips back to the years before those covered by Moskowitz and gives several intriguing glimpses of a phenomenon that might be dubbed proto- or pre-fandom, or eo-fandom: pioneering starts, mostly false, that foreshadowed fandom as we know it.

The main attention here is devoted to the 1940s. Essentially Warner starts with the Chicon of 1940, the second Worldcon; he continues through the 1941 Denver convention, the wartime period, and the resumption of full fannish civilization after the war. He bows out with the Convention of 1949, vowing to return with another volume on fandom in the 1950s and possibly a third in the 60s.

Aside from the facts that the two books at hand cover consecutive decades, that their authors are both fans of many years

standing and wide fame, that they are both based on material tried out over many years in fan journals and finally published as books by fan-owned enterprises, and that they are the only extant full-fledged fan histories, there is an even greater interest in their comparison.

A brief aside on that matter of "only extant full-fledged fan histories." There are a number of other works that come close, but all diverge in some way. Speer's pioneering *Up To Now* at 20,000 words was long in its day (1939), but was less than book length. The two *Fancyclopedias* were essentially reference works, organized encyclopedia fashion, and although they contain much historical data scattered among the entries, they are not "consecutive" histories. Francis T. Laney's *Ah, Sweet Idiocy* perhaps comes even closer, but focuses so narrowly on Laney's own experiences that it must be regarded as a memoir rather than a history.

Harry Warner is a sane, perceptive and intelligent man. Warner writes about trivia. He knows that he writes about trivia, and knows that his reader knows that he writes about trivia. The tone of his book is cool, wry, detached, amused.

He divides his material logically. Chapters are devoted to prominent persons, institutions, associations, conventions, collections; the impact of Hitler's War on fandom in the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia; the N3F, Degler's Cosmic Circle, Shaverism; the apas, the conventions, the clubs, outstanding fanzines and so on.

Everything is categorized, sectioned and sub-sectioned, organized to the point where one feels it possible to find any fact desired by simply riffling the contents page (actually four pages) as easily as the index.

Warner realizes that the doings of three junior high school science students in

Beaver Pelt, Manitoba, has little relation to and little impact on the doings of half a dozen struggling would-be SF pros in Brooklyn. And his writing is in accord with his valid observation.

Moskowitz by contrast displays classic symptoms of paranoia coupled with delusions of grandeur. Everywhere there are movements and conspiracies, plots are afoot to do in rivals and to seize power. Fanzine publishers do not produce their journals for pleasure or for self-expression. They do so as political moves, engaging in earth-shaking circulation wars in order to attain publishing supremacy and hence the control of fannish thoughts and communications.

Fans do not form clubs to provide a congenial place for programs and/or social gatherings, but as power movements designed to seize control of the fannish world.

To a man whose thought processes work in these strange and devious ways, the natural way of organizing material in a history is to weave all personalities, all organizations, all occurrences, into a single patterned web. Publishing houses engage in great circulation wars. Packed meeting halls are rocked by impassioned debate and sly parliamentary maneuver. Fiscal crises shake the very structure of great and vital movements.

All of these things are described in ringing prose as Moskowitz denounces base villainies, vindicates besmirched innocents and lauds heroically desperate defenders of the right.

It is only rarely that he slips in a statistic or other verifiable (or at least measurable) descriptions in place of the grandiose adjective. And thus we realize, with a hilarious jolt, that the circulation wars involve hectograph runs of 50 copies, or at most mimeographed or printed periodicals with circulations in the 100 to 200 copy range. Thus we learn that the packed

meeting hall is Jimmy Taurasi's basement and the masses of struggling delegates are five teen-aged boys. Thus we learn that the struggling financier is Sam Moskowitz himself and the zealously husbanded treasury is his one dollar per week allowance.

And what are we left with after reading *The Immortal Storm* and *All Our Yesterdays*? Warner's book is the product of a superior intelligence, painstaking research, careful organization and lucid writing. It is an academically correct book, a highly valuable research document (assuming that one *cares* that much about the history of fandom). It is also wholly lacking in passion and tends, as one might expect, to an academic dryness.

Many was the page on which Warner gave me twenty facts, where I would happily have accepted the three or four most significant, and had him devote the remaining space to telling me the meaning of all those facts.

Moskowitz's book, because Sam is a prejudiced reporter, is of highly suspect value as a research document. But because Sam, in his paranoia and innocent dishonesty, has woven all his material in a passionate narration, his book reads like a lurid novel: clumsy and illiterate but gripping in the extreme . . . and laden with frequent bonuses of unintentional humor.

I don't know if you really care that much about the inner machinations of fandom in the 1930s and 40s, and if you don't, go with my blessing. But if you *do* care about the microcosm and its history, both of these books must be read. The Warner is available from Advent currently, and is a well-made handsome volume, worth its steep price. The Moskowitz is out of print and you will have to depend on stumbling across a used copy somewhere, or else borrow one, but don't pass it up.

—RICHARD A. LUPOFF

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### ON SALE NOW IN APRIL FANTASTIC

The ALL NEW FANTASTIC with ALL STORIES NEW and COMPLETE, plus a NEW FIRST for FANTASTIC. This issue introduces the FIRST PSYCHEDELIC cover for FANTASTIC; a cover by the famous **MIKE HINGE** (a cover to be framed); this is the first for FANTASTIC—actually, March AMAZING had the FIRST PSYCHEDELIC COVER by **TODD & BODE**. Included in the April issue is GORDON EKLUND's MAJOR NEW NOVEL—**BEYOND THE RESURRECTION**, BOB SHAW's—**A DOME OF MANY-COLORED GLASS**, TERRY CARR's—**THUS I REFUTE**, DAVID BUNCH's—**UP TO THE EDGE OF HEAVEN**, F.M. BUSBY's—**THE PUISS OF KRRLIL**, and other stories; plus ALEXEI PANSIN's new feature—**THE RESURRECTION OF SF-I**. This is a must for all FANTASY and SF readers.

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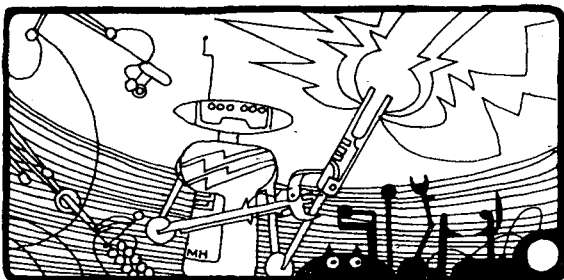
### BACK ISSUES S F MAGAZINES

AMAZING and FANTASTIC (1963–1970), S F GREATS, THRILLING S.F., S F ADVENTURE CLASSICS, STRANGE FANTASY, SPACE ADVENTURES, SCIENCE FANTASY, ASTOUNDING S F, FANTASTIC ADVENTURES YEARBOOK—1970, THE STRANGEST STORIES EVER TOLD, SCIENCE FICTION CLASSICS—MOST ISSUES AVAILABLE (60¢). ULTIMATE PUB. CO., BOX 7, OAKLAND GARDENS, FLUSHING, N.Y. 11364.

THE FUTURE IN BOOKS

113

# ...OR SO YOU SAY



*Letters intended for publication should be typed, double-spaced, on just one side of each sheet of paper, and addressed to: Or So You Say, P.O. Box 409, Falls Church, Va., 22046.*

Dear Ted,

I just read Buck Coulson's remarks about the story he wrote with DeWeese ("By the Book," Gene DeWeese and Robert Coulson, *AMAZING*, May, 1971, Vol. 45., No. 1., p. 80). He says that the story didn't sell on the first go-round. They added the environmental quotes and you bought it. Buck suspects that topicality is a selling point these days. Is there any truth to that assumption? Do you print things because they are topical?

The reason I am asking is because I have noted a great number of environmental doomsday stories lately. Most are contrived. Some show a lack of knowledge. And with the exception of the Lafferty story in *Quark* #3, they generally show a lack of humor. Coulson and DeWeese show a rather sarcastic humor in pointing out nature's conception of maintenance, and that's good, but that's all you can say about it. Cute gimmick.

The national magazines are on to it, planned obsolescence that is, and many have written about it. Ralph Nader is leading a campaign against it. Everyone and his kid brother talks about it in everyday conversation. You're working

with something that is not new. So why was the story in *AMAZING*?

JOHN L. ROBINSON, JR.  
1437 Western Ave.  
Albany, N.Y., 12203

*Obviously; because the editor is a sucker —and Coulson & DeWeese put one over on him. Of course, I never saw the story without the quotes, but you can be sure that if the authors think they pulled a slick one—they probably did.—TW*

Dear Sir:

Just finished Silverberg's "Second Trip," (First Part, July) along with your comments concerning his language abuse.

Sorry, can't agree. Every bit of past education, and experience still makes me believe that even a small crack in the trapdoor of hell can be widened, allowing the entire almost human race to fall from the heights of a carefully built dignity, to the utter depths of self degradation.

I have been a Seafaring man for twenty-six years. Rather difficult for me to find anyone who can out-cuss me when faced with a need to use profanity. (Such language is used with knotted fist for the benefit of the illiterate with limited recognizable vocabularies.)

I am now forty six. My resentment against certain words began in High School. Small School, only two teachers for all subjects, so now I don't even re-

member the name of the class, or the name of the subject.

An incident happened which made a lifetime impact upon me. I can deduce, from the usable vocabularies of others around me, that they also arrived at the same conclusion.

Two books were presented. One entitled *Anatomy*, the other *Sexology*. We were asked to compare the two, and write a report explaining the differences detected between them. My report was singled out as the best of twenty-six. (All boys, girls taught separately because a member of the opposite sex, in the same room is a distraction, and does not help the student concentrate upon his studies.)

My Report. No difference between the covers. Same education, same ideas, same topics of discussion, same valuable information. Two different names for the same thing.

From either book, I could learn the name of, and the duty of each part of a Male or Female human body. Hydrogen atom inside of a water molecule. Molecule inside of a red corpuscle, etc. Kidney, a filter of liquid. Clitoris, with a duty to make the act of reproduction pleasant for the female, when understood by the husband. Brain, with many duties, not the least of which is, to conceive an understanding of its own atomic, and molecular structure.

Pregnancy, Childbirth, Venereal disease, causes and results of shame, fear, etc.

Conclusion. One name is redundant, and useless words waste time and cause trouble. Prescription. Eliminate the one of least value. Use and teach the one most effective.

Called *Anatomy* in the Catholic School, Taught by Nuns to boys, and by lay Brothers to girls, with no argument at all concerning whether or not it should be taught.

Called by name of *Sexology* in Public Schools, and entirely too many people can't even figure out whether or not it should be taught. They worry themselves silly over it.

A child will say, "That is a lie." A Lawyer will say, "Now that is only your opinion." Do not both of them put the same idea across, and express the same doubts concerning the truth of a remark?

Do we still tell a man to go to hell when he expects us to do our duty? Have we not learned from the Police that it is more effective and more polite to say, "Go hire a Lawyer?"

Vulgarity does not appeal to me because I learn words very slowly, with much difficulty. I had to be forty before understanding the language of a Navigator, because of big words, and no agreed upon definition.

Recently, a lump on elbow as big as a lemon. Worried everybody but me. Because of a Medical dictionary. Looking up each word in the definition of a definition, I found that—If painful, its infected, use an antibiotic, and drain the fluid. If not painful, leave it alone. Nature's way of growing a cushion around damaged gristle in joint which heals slower than flesh, but quicker than bone. I like words which teach me something not understood previously.

Often, an abbreviation is better than a lecture, but not where profanity is concerned, since profanity is an abbreviation of a more educated expression.

Should our Authors go on using it, I hope some day they find themselves stranded up the proverbial tributary, lacking adequate means of propulsion. Where upon, I will gladly quip. Go make like a contortionist, and perform freak biological act.

Had others around me not wasted my time using bum slang, I could have acquired this vocabulary in my teens. Life

as a High School dropout, was no love making fun, and, due to inability to earn enough to meet expenses caused divorce, which also took the fun out of making love. Does the Abbreviation, No fucking fun, No fun fucking, say it any better? Does the abbreviation, up shit creek without a paddle, or go fuck yourself express the insult more effectively? Or perhaps make a better appeal to the desire of a human being to make himself at least appear to be more intelligent, more dignified, and more effective than he really is?

I resent about half of our language because it is wasting the time of the youngsters in school, even as it wasted time out of my own life.

What kind of Nut wants to spend the best years of his life in a schoolhouse?

Is there such a thing as a middle aged person who does not say, "Oh, Boy, If only I had known then, what I know now?"

Where are those who say, "Let's stop the same essence of the barn yard from being used to keep the next generation equally stupid."

No, I would not be a Book-Burner. Even when I pull weeds from a garden, I still grind them up for fertilizer. But, there is a certain type of book (Called trash) which has become like wire coat-hangers.

More than enough have already been written. Anybody writing one more might as well offer me one more hole in the head. I got one too many already. Nazi bullet.

I am sure I am not the only one who finds certain expressions repulsive. However, I have taken the trouble to explain my excuses for my resentment.

Yet, if I were the Editor, I just might say, "Lets have more of it. It will appeal to the mentally immature, attract them to SF, and put them under the influence of intelligent, educated, practicing scien-

tists, who would otherwise go ignored. Those who object to profanity do so for a childish personal reason which has something to do with their own past personal experiences. Youngsters of today did not have those experiences, did not have the same bad luck, so the excuse does not apply to them at all. SF is also highly educational, and to get thru to those who need it, an author must learn the changes in the slanguage of the times.

I can even remember a remark made by one of my teachers concerning the other.

She said, "You will address her as Sister Elizabeth, and refer to her as The Mother Superior, not That Old Battle Axe."

My drop out education even tho limited, has still allowed me to go snoop personally into every war zone of my generation.

Respectfully and sincerely.

DANIEL D. BACKRAK  
5439 Dodd Street  
Mira Loma, California

Dear Editor:

John Brunner, and other S.F. writers nowadays, have a blind spot and a bias that spells delusion. That crudity in speech could possibly create "realism" is as delusory as such ideas come. Few are given to such behavior.

At 57, having lived from coast to coast nearly all of my life, I know that the people who use foul language and act lewdly are a very small and seldom met minority. Most of us don't bother; the only time we let one slip, we have hit our thumb with a hammer.

I've hung out around Skid Row in my time, and I know there are bums and whores with foul mouths and manners, but even in that sink-hole the majority doesn't indulge in foulness to excess. If you think speech must be foul to be real, you don't know human nature. Most of



us have better things to think about than bathroom and bedroom episodes.

I don't know where you and your writers hang out, but it has to be in some outlandish environment unknown to the common horde. If profanity and pornography seem normal to you, to us it is ugly and uncalled for. Mr. Geo. C. Brown hit the nail on the head when he called it "absolutely unnecessary." I find every instance is so labored and contrived as to bog down the story, and there is never any legitimate tie-in to make it a necessity. It's no more nor less than a writer with a bee in his bonnet making us take it willy-nilly, so he can prove his point. The result is the furthest thing from "realism" ever put into print.

You don't have to turn prude, or ban anything. But a little discrimination would make a lot of difference. Hope you know where you can get some.

GWEN CUNNINGHAM  
1438 Corona Place  
Walnut Creek, Ca., 94596

*I suggest you read Mr. Backrak's letter—you share an antipathy for certain aspects of our language, but I think he has the edge on you in his understanding of its use and prevalence. I don't suppose communication with you on this subject is really possible, but I assure you that in my opinion not one "foul word" or "pornographic scene" has appeared gratuitously in any of the stories I've published here. The authors each had points to make, valid points about the human condition. This magazine does not use profanity or sex as a "come-on" to sell more copies, nor is it likely to as long as I remain its editor. Our visual package is designed in total indifference to the Salacious Sell—there are no buxom nudes cavorting on our covers, and no headlines screaming something along the lines of I WAS AT A TEEN-AGE ORGY ON MARS. But as long as human*

*sexuality remains one of the greatest motivating forces mankind can experience, it will be a fit subject for use when appropriate by our authors. And the "foulness" of language which you decry—and Mr. Backrak thinks an unnecessary "abbreviation"—dates to the very foundation of the English language. Centuries of occasional suppression have done little to wipe these words out of the vocabularies of "the common horde," and for one simple reason: they describe basic human functions in a direct, pithy, and non-hypocritical fashion. "Fashion," indeed, has dictated their currency in open conversation—they are least in fashion when morality is at its most repressive, and society is most ill. The suppression of these words is an exercise in symbolic magic—and a futile one. We are supposed to believe that if a word does not exist, the condition it describes will also not exist. Most exercises in "polite" language are hypocritical at bottom, and too many "polite" euphemisms serve only to obfuscate a reality of which we are all aware, but occasionally too ashamed to admit. But why are we ashamed? Because by the use of this segregated language we've been taught lies about ourselves and our bodies and their functions. And all too many of us have been too well conditioned.—TW.*

Dear Ted White,

Your November editorial was interesting, but I think you missed a few points that are important. A film has to be judged by different standards than a book because each relies on different qualities to achieve its effect on the viewer or reader. A film loses some of the subtlety of a book version of an author's ideas because it pictures everything, granted. But a film can have much more dramatic effect than the book does. In reference to 2001, I can think of three sequences almost immediately: The sequences

where the bone thrown into the air becomes the weapons satellite in orbit, the deaths of the three astronauts in suspended animation being represented as only smoothing curves and red lights, and finally, the point when the pod is in front of the much larger *Discovery*, holding Poole's body like a sacrifice. Each of these scenes gets much more across in a few moments than the book does in an entire page; as soon as the viewer sees the satellite appear, moving across the screen, he can see the analogy but the surprise effect is lost in a novel because it takes too long to set up the words that will describe it. In print, by the time the reader comes to the surprise, the effect is often lost. In a book, any number of different readers will get almost any number of different impressions from a scene in a book, because few authors take the time to describe the setting in the complete detail that a single scene in a film can. By the same token, even if Clarke himself had written the entire screenplay, it is almost impossible to get across in one scene Clarke's sense of wonder at the magic of alien worlds. The viewer has to do all this for himself. Digressing, this may be one factor that decides whether a book is pleasing to a reader or not; the entire setting and background of a book depends to a large degree on the reader's own experience, whether the reader can visualise things or whether he sees the main characters alone, just moving across a sort of gray background. I hope this is all at least a little clear; it is at times like this that one realizes just how inadequate the written word is.

On another subject, I'm glad to see that you are interested in recent forays by some schools into science fiction. At the high school I attend (I'm a senior), Pingry in Elizabeth, the administration is interested in revising the curriculum, and through the efforts of some friends of

mine and myself, there is probably going to be a full credit course in science fiction in the fall of 1972. The course is going to be mainly a chronological one that will run from Wells to Niven, though we are having some trouble deciding which books and stories to use. I was wondering if you might have some ideas on the subject, because we would welcome any suggestions that you or just about anyone else might have. We can do a maximum of nine books, and are also interested in selecting episodes of *Star Trek*, and films that are shown on tv. The course will run about ten or twelve weeks.

TOM MULLEN

Box 409, Whitehouse Stn.

New Jersey 08889

*No, the written word isn't "Inadequate"—just more demanding of its users. Good writing is a considerable skill and requires a dedicated craft—as perhaps you are becoming aware.—TW*

Dear Ted:

Can't say I was too happy with the cover this time. Somehow, it looks too pulpish—no, I'm not contracting a minor case of Lapidusitis—but it reminds me too much of war comics covers and y'know the scene ("Help, Cap'n Storm, the yellow devils are attacking our aircraft carrier with bamboo poles!"). Technically, I suppose the art passes muster, but the connotations it brings to my mind are not the best. Perhaps the other readers were not similarly affected. I hope.

At my college, B. F. Skinner is god of the Psychology department. Anyone who disputes his word is in trouble with established opinion. Psych majors are inculcated with his Plan. Thus, it is not unusual for them to brand me as a reactionary conservative for differing with his Truth. It's quite a change from what people usually brand me, when they dish out a few out-moded political labels.

Actually, Skinner's philosophy is rather reactionary itself, building as it does, on the behaviorists' victory over the introspectionalists and gestalt psychologists dating from the 1920s. I'm afraid tradition has already firmly entrenched itself in the discipline, making Skinner and his Saints and Martyrs (his "shy" daughter being among this host) the leaders of the whole science—if you want to call psych a real science, burdened as it is with subjective opinions and a loose interpretation of the scientific method, not to mention its rather primitive predictive powers. Ha, but what can I say, since I'm a sociology major in a discipline almost equally stymied by the subjective, the traditional and narrowness of scope. Still, I hope by clinging to a generalist's outlook, that I may be able to stop myself from being sucked into the rather rigid System of the academic sociologist.

Another rather pithy little story from you, being "4:48 PM, October 6, 197-: . . ." and certainly it is as effective as the others. Archer's fragile hope that the Soldiers would side with the Citizens seems a bit optimistic for the times. In fact, I'd see police defections to the side of the people as more likely than elements of the army or National Guard. [*The Army and the Guard are sometime draftees and volunteers, not imbedded in a Career.* —TW] Further, Archer is fooling himself, but not the reader, if he senses any hope for a mob of citizens to topple the government. The bit about Universal Gun Registration, however, makes me think that Archer's compatriots are militant rightwingers rising against a "peace" liberal newly elected to the Presidency. The other reference to Chicago in 1968, though, confuses the issue further. Perhaps you meant it to be purposely ambiguous.

Peck's fiction was properly chilling, though I could sense the end before I'd

gotten far into the story itself. Somehow I knew Max-Ten-Smith had to die.

Lupoff's "The Heyworth Fragment," on the other hand, was completely unpredictable. I read it with a mounting sense of excitement. An intricate plot would've hindered the development of the presense, the atmosphere that the explication of the film itself evolved. I believe this unpretentious method of unfolding the action is simple, natural, rather than simplistic. Still, I was caught up short by the ending with a foreboding knocking at the back of my mind. Would the "democratically chosen leaders" decide the film's depiction portrayed a real future danger, and thus develop counter-measures which end up being the very measures the film warned about? Would things come full circle with the democratic leaders using the very same tactics as those shown on the film? Thus, a future prophecy causes the past to adopt means which made the future dyutopia inevitably come true? Cheesus Chrise, the paradoxes could be worse than that too.

In a lighter vein, is Tuck Heyworth, excuse the expression, a tuckerization of Bob Tucker the originator of the tuckerizing process? After all, he lives in Heyworth, Illinois doesn't he? [*Indeed, yes* —TW]

Ted, do you publish these moral zealots to amuse us? After C. V. Blane I'd thought we'd reached the abyss of this ridiculous kind of moral uptightness. Then, the puritanial atheist puts you down for similar reasons, with Harris and Brown not far behind. Do you really get a lot of letters like this? Maybe I should read "The Second Trip" again. I didn't notice all these profane and awful expressions as I was actually reading it. Perhaps I was too involved in the story to bother. However, I wish Harris, Brown and Blane and their ilk would just once comment on the actual literary merits of the stories so

morally outrageous to their bourgeois tastes. Maybe they could forgive Bob Silverberg a few pithy expressions in his story if they'd try to discuss the artistic value of the work on an intelligent, rational level. For instance, Brown claimed "Junk Patrol" was an excellent sf story, but nowhere did he say what your story did to his head, but just ranted on about a mere four words in a story of many more words than that. Oh, Mr. Brown, I've met both Bob Silverberg and the editor, and if they are abnormal in a pathological way, or even a neurotic sense, then it must be something that possesses them when they get behind the typewriter late at night. Personally, I've rarely met more decent human beings, in the sense they treat others like they'd like to be treated themselves. However, people like you, Mr. Brown, make people like me paranoid. Indeed, it's the leaders of this country who ban books while attempting to cover up real obscenities like the My Lai atrocity, that are making me more and more paranoid. Where is your moral righteousness when pawns of the ruling class shoot down students in cold blood? Or do you go along with the rest, chanting: "The score is four, but we'll get more."

Well, if there are any sick minds within the pages of AMAZING, I'd wager they're the Middle Americans who count all the dirty words in a 127-page novel. Of course, if you guys would spend more of your time doing this for Spiro on a salaried basis, then perhaps you'd have less time to send your police forces, crooked politicians and fascist leaders out to beat the shit out of us who don't subscribe to your "pornographic" society.

DAVE HULVEY

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Harrisonburg, Va. 22801

*The polarization of the police vs. the people*

*first became readily apparent in Chicago, in 1968, when quite ordinary "straight" people found themselves involved in a police riot simply because they wished to use the streets of their own city and were unlucky enough to encounter a police force enraged and out of control. Since then this country has witnessed additional outbursts by the police, usually against innocent bystanders whose only crime was to be on hand at the wrong moment. "Christopher Street" was written in early 1969, when further deterioration of relations between the police and the public seemed likely—I simply carried it to its ultimate resolution, all-out war. —TW*

Dear Ted,

I suppose it's inevitable that polarization in our society will create propagandistic fiction, but I certainly didn't expect to read any in AMAZING. Your story, "4:48 PM, October 6, 197-: . . ." is a blatant example of cheap, moralistic writing, and, apart from the propagandistic elements essential to it, is a lousy piece of fiction besides.

First of all, it's an incident, not a story. Ronald Archer is introduced while he's partaking in a desperate situation, and the only attempt at a plot is an explanation of how Archer arrived at this dilemma anyhow. Why did the police riot? Who are they rioting against? Why do they regard Archer as an enemy? All these questions are left to the no-doubt overactive imaginations of the readers.

Secondly, there are elements to the story that are unessential. The fact that Archer refrains from mating with a wounded, teen-aged girl has no function in the development of what little plot there is. He could hardly have done so in any event—his position required constant vigilance, and the girl was very badly hurt—so the explanation you offer, "Honey, I've seen everything a girl your

age has got," doesn't even function as an indication of Archer's character; I don't believe his pristine pure moral goodness was the only thing that kept Archer from making love to Marcia.

Thirdly, with the wound Marcia had received it is very doubtful that she could even walk, much less be offering her body to Archer.

Finally, the story is an out-and-out piece of propaganda. With the police rioting through the city like mad dogs, shooting innocent women merely because (as you imply) they're black, you are attempting to force a particular viewpoint onto the reader, it seems. I know it is impossible for an author to totally divorce his opinions from his writing, but it is certainly feasible to use a lighter hand than you did. "4:48 PM, October 6, 197-: . . ." reminds me of fiction published in Germany just before WWII. Usually a beautiful blonde nordic girl would be pursued by a mob of slobbering Poles. You've just added a touch of color to the female and put uniforms on the villains.

JOHN F. KUSSKE

3527 Pillsbury Ave., South  
Minneapolis, Minn., 55408

*As I've stated before, I believe that the short-story form is best utilized to present the emotional nexus of a novel—the remainder of which surrounds the story by implication. The construction of "Christopher Street" was not an accident. My purpose in not answering most of the questions in your second paragraph was the deliberate creation of ambiguity, but apparently you took me a step further in interpreting Marcia's skirt-hiking as an offer to "mating" with Archer; the exchange was sexual to be sure, but on a much subtler level, each testing the responses of the other. Archer is well into his middle age, and by his probably outworn code of values any liberties he might*

*take with the girl would be inexcusable. He is not, however, articulate on the subject. As for the "propaganda" aspects of the story, see my reply to Dave Hulvey.*  
—TW

Dear Ted:

I had a feeling while reading the latest issues of FANTASTIC and AMAZING that I'd be writing a letter to one or the other about this time to praise John Brunner's two new novels. But the task (pleasant though it may be) might have been put off had I not had occasion to see my name staring out at me from the body of Cy Chauvin's letter. Flattered that anyone had taken note of my previous missive I said to myself "This deserves some comment." And so . . .

Cy, you are not alone. I have come to the conclusion that it is easier for a denizen of Tel Aviv to buy a copy of AMAZING than it is for me. This is especially interesting, and somewhat ironic, because I live within five miles of the home and office of the publisher of this venerable periodical. Yet, in recent months such is indeed the case.

Things came to a head last summer. It was mid-August, the summer session at the College had just ended. I had waited and waited for the September AMAZING to appear on the racks of my favorite candy store. (I have deliberately not subscribed as part of my effort to keep the SF magazines on the local newsstands.) For weeks there was no sign of it and then the October FANTASTIC appeared! Annoyed and frustrated, I decided to take my case to the highest court. That afternoon I rode my trust Peugeot UO-8 ten-speed to the seat of the Ultimate publishing empire.

It was a small, cozy, ranch type house in a comfortable middle class neighborhood. A bit out of the way, it stood facing an undeveloped tract of Cunningham

**OR SO YOU SAY**

**121**

Park. Mr. and Mrs. Sol Cohen received me graciously and I spent a pleasant half hour discussing the exigencies of the publishing business with Mr. Cohen. He explained, as Ted White has in his editorials, that a good piece of the problems begins and ends with the distributors. Each has a monopoly in its area (in this part of N.Y. a bunch of fuggheads known as the Imperial News Co.) and the small newsdealers, stationery, and candy stores, not to mention the small specialty publishers, are at their mercy.

On my way home I made an impromptu survey of fifteen stores that sell magazines, all of which were "serviced" by Imperial. Of these, 14 had the then current issue of *Analog*, 9 had *F&SF*, 5 had Ultimate's reprint-zine *SF ADVENTURE CLASSICS*, one had *FANTASTIC*, and one (a different one) had *AMAZING*. Continued observation shows that this state of affairs continues unchanged. If this is the situation within walking distance of the publisher then there is little hope for the *SF* magazines. Happy prozine hunting, Cy.

At this point I'd like to propose another measure aimed at increasing the readership of *SF* magazines. Of late the paperback publishers have been adding more ad inserts to their books. Once these consisted of ads for relatively appropriate things, like the *SF Book Club*. Today a turn of a page of some recent novel may bring you to a pitch for cigarettes. I propose that all future contracts for publication rights of stories or novels originally published in the prozines stipulate that a blurb or ad for the magazine be prominently displayed on the back cover or on an insert (perhaps a postage free subscription card). This would serve to make the non-fan paperback reader more aware of the magazines and thus increase circulation. It'd be nice if we could do it.

Well, Ted, I'm amazed once again. Both of the magazines you edit are *continually* improving in every way. The heavy cover stock and the handsome art (I especially liked the Oct. *FANTASTIC* and the Nov. *AMAZING*) are a real improvement as is the somehow cleaner look of the interiors. The serialized novels promise—and deliver, more and more. Both the new Brunner novels were entertaining, if not quite up to *Stand on Zanzibar*. I especially liked "The Dramaturges of Yan," even though the part I evocation of Yan seemed at times a Brunnerish diluted bit of LeGuin in atmosphere and texture, and the climax of part II resembles nothing so much as the conclusion of Clarke's *Childhood's End*. These similarities were probably unintentional and though they evidence that this novel is nothing strikingly new, they do not prevent, in fact they may help it, in being a fascinating work.

Some of the situations in "The Other End of Time" could almost have come from the world and socio-culture-historical matrix of *Stand On Zanzibar* (or is it just that all these depressing near-futures are all beginning to look the same to me). Again, Brunner offers us nothing really new here, but we don't miss it, on the whole it's a neat, diverting piece of work.

If this goes on *AMAZING* may take the Hugo next time around.

MOSHE FEDER

142-34 Booth Memorial Ave.

Flushing, N.Y. 11355

*Inasmuch as those paperback inserts bring in much-needed (or desired) advertising revenues, I doubt you'll be seeing ads for the professional sf magazines in that format—at least not as a contractual obligation. But many paperback publishers do credit the original magazine appearance of the novels or stories they publish—most commonly with or near the copyright in-*

formation. This may be less than conspicuous, but it is worth noting. (Now if only they'd stop referring to our publication of

complete novels as "portions of this work," I'd be completely happy. . . .) —TW

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(Continued from page 90)

Hindi, European, priest, rabbi, mad motherfucking idiots, every bloody soul that lived on the earth.

It wasn't a matter of leaving the sick and the maimed behind: they took them too. They moved entire hospitals to other planets. Something about the climate or the atmosphere or the gravity.

The congenital idiots, the institutionally insane, those who were in continuous coma; these they took along with them to Altair IV or the seas of a dead planet in the far arm of the galaxy or to wherever their whims or urges took them.

They moved entire buildings; they moved whole prisons full of people. Condemned prisoners got one last look at the universe and were reprieved, suddenly shared that vision with the rest of Mankind.

How can you kill a man who has seen the Beauty of the Void and shared it with you?

You realize that these are not my words: these are the words of those few who went out there and came back,

the artists and friends who became missionaries of the Universal Voidal Beauty.

"Come with us, Ed. We're going back. The Earth is too confining. You don't know. How can you turn your back on it till you've done it?"

And who's left to do the work, to paint the paintings, to write the music, the prose, the poetry? Who's left to till the fields, to man the foundries, to crush the grapes? Oh, there's more than enough left here for one man to live out a life of ease: wines and whiskeys, lobsters and caviar, or just plain hamburgers, beans, and beer; all frozen and canned for instant use now or fifty years from now.

But sometimes I walk down to the transmitter at City Hall and I run my hands over the dials, turning them, knowing that as I do, its beam crosses and recrosses the beams from London, from Mars, from Alpha Centauri, from Vega, from Sirius. And where those beams cross, Man walks.

And I turn away, frightened.

—GRANT CARRINGTON

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OR SO YOU SAY

123



attention—but not worthy of an intelligent choice of critics or critical criteria.

Peter S. Prescott is apparently *Newsweek's* pop-culture critic; only a few issues earlier he devoted a review of a book about the comics by calling our attention to the essentially tasteless trash that all comics must invariably be—in other words, by sneering at the entire phenomenon from his olympian position as a prestigious critic for a major news-weekly. The editors at *Newsweek* were probably well aware that Prescott would bring the same condescending attitude to bear upon science fiction, and he certainly did not disappoint them:

“A quick cram course in what has happened to science fiction since you were a kid and used to read it,” he says in his opening sentence, thus establishing his credentials: sf is kid stuff, on par with Superman and Buck Rogers; the sort of thing you outgrow when you discover girls.

“Science has outrun it. Not very long ago ‘Astounding Science Fiction’ presented Ron Hubbard’s crackpot theory of dianetics as if it were a matter to be taken seriously, saying that medical journals took too long to get the important news to the public. Since then, Hubbard has founded a religion, Scientology, the rest of us have landed on the moon, discovered DNA and made blueprints of the coming ecological catastrophe.” Note how Prescott has distorted the facts to his advantage, linking a 1950 Dianetics article with present-day sf, while pretending that sf ignored moon-landings, genetic manipulation and ecology. In fact, of course, we were using all three in sf long before 1950, and “science” has yet to outrun our imaginations.

“Science fiction,” he continues, “has turned to sex, sentimental religion and inept experiments with style. For sentimental religion, pleasingly expressed

through sex, no one can surpass Robert A. Heinlein’s ‘Stranger in a Strange Land’: ‘As they merged, grokking together, Mike said softly and triumphantly: “Thou are God . . . We grok God”.’ You may say you can’t read this stuff without laughing, but hundreds of thousands of teen-agers can, as well as half a million adult illiterates who defend, with a kind of locker-room *machismo*, what Harlan Ellison pretends is a ‘revolution’ in science fiction today.” This isn’t a statement of fact, but of opinion: narrow-minded, semantically loaded with coy posturing and insults galore. You liked *Stranger in a Strange Land*? You’re illiterate! Does Harlan really think there’s some sort of “revolution” going on in sf today? Of course not—he’s just pretending!

Then, the *coup de grace*:

“Science-fiction writers, unlike detective-story writers [oh yeah?], continue to lust after respectability, attempting to drag anyone who writes with imagination into their camp. In fact, science fiction, like pornography, is rarely respectable in itself but provides for good writers a rhetoric that can be applied to serious fiction. The best we can hope for from routine science fiction is a sequence of ingenious speculations and pleasing images that prod us awake as we doze over the prose and return, perhaps, to prick at our memories after the stories themselves have long been forgotten. And the best is none too easy to find. The rule is to avoid the writers you have heard of (if they have survived, they are simply stuffing a little copulation and village atheism into the same stories they wrote 30 years ago) and avoid as well the writers you haven’t heard of because they are doing the same, only writing it worse: ‘In the flushrush of blood of dawn of I-am-the-erection-and-the-strife,’ as Philip José Farmer says. The only course is

to choose novels that are being pushed as real fiction and even then you will lose two times out of three, as I did."

From the review up to this point (and I've quoted it all), you might guess that Prescott had read *Time* or *Stranger*, briefly dipped into *Dangerous Visions* (the quotes from Ellison and Farmer buttress this notion) and little else. But the remainder of the review is devoted to three novels—*Margaret and I* by Kate Wilhelm, *Gray Matters* by William Hjortsberg, and *The Lathe of Heaven* by Ursula K. Le Guin. Prescott hated the first two and grudgingly admits a liking for the third, of which he says (still condescendingly), "The Lathe of Heaven," however, is really a very neat performance, accomplishing what science fiction is supposed to do"—which, you'll recall, isn't really very much.

I suppose I should feel gratified that at the least Prescott liked (if that's the word) the novel which we published here last year, but in truth I find it hard to work up much gratitude to him for anything in his neat little performance. The entire basis of the review as a whole is a kind of smarmy intellectual dishonesty: Prescott has used it to score points, not to provide us with anything approaching genuine criticism. He has exploited us, used us as a vehicle for his own posturing little ego-trip. It's his game, and fairness is not one of the rules. If you don't like it—tough.

When I read that review I wrote *Newsweek* a letter—something I rarely do. I wrote it on the letterhead of this magazine and I deliberately kept it short and to the point. For my pains I was rewarded with a form letter addressed to "Dear Newsweek Reader," which thanked me for my letter and pointed out that "our critics, though they have wide experience in their several fields, respect dissenting

views and are well aware that theirs is not the only possible evaluation."

The brief letter ended with "Since they value their readers' insights, we always forward copies of their mail to them; we know your letter will be appreciated." Meaning: We don't intend to give you equal time in our letter column, and the critic you responded to has filed your letter in his wastebasket.

This is precisely what *Newsweek* thinks of science fiction: It is beneath contempt, fit only to be held up to ridicule, and best reviewed by someone whose respect for sf can most easily be summed up by this magnanimous phrase: "The rule is to avoid the writers you have heard of . . . and avoid as well the writers you haven't heard of." In other words, don't read anything by science fiction writers.

I WOULD PROBABLY NOT have chosen this topic for this editorial had *Newsweek* printed my letter—or, indeed, *any* letter from the sf community or anyone favorably disposed toward sf. However, *Newsweek* closed the door to all such letters (which others have told me they also wrote), in favor of letters on the television show, "All in the Family," a painting of Hugh Hefner in the nude which appeared in *Punch*, and the usage of "Ms." (which will always mean "manuscript" to me) as an alternate form of address for liberated women.

What can one do about such irresponsible attacks in the media? Not much, I would guess. They hold most of the cards—including the right to don a mask of smug self-righteousness which denies all legitimate response or dissent. Our ox was gored, but we don't even merit the courtesy of a token rebuttal.

Of course we *could* deluge *Newsweek* with a continuing barrage of letters . . . pointing up the many factual inaccuracies, the bias and the irresponsibility of

Prescott's review. If even ten percent of you were to write to *Newsweek* protesting that review, the resulting several thousand letters would surely make someone in that publishing bureaucracy sit up and take notice—and perhaps even assign a different reviewer to the next batch of sf books. But is it worth it? Does it really mean that much? Will the sales of the two books which were panned suffer? Will *The Lathe of Heaven* sell any better? Is, indeed, all of this just a tempest in a teapot?

Frankly, I doubt anyone outside the sf community noticed that review—or cared about it. A week later most of the several million copies of that issue of *Newsweek* were probably in the garbage dump, smoldering. Nothing is more ephemeral than last week's news or last week's news magazine. There are probably more copies still around of the May, 1950 *Astounding* (the one which came out "not very long ago" with Hubbard's first piece on Dianetics) than there are of the issue of *Newsweek* which came out that same week.

And what does "recognition" in the mass media—or the critical bastions, like the *New York Review of Books*—really boil down to, anyway? Sf has produced its best-sellers, *Stranger* and *Dune* among them, quite without the help of these Taste-Makers and their own incestuous back-patting.

Perhaps we're better off remaining within our own ghetto, where at least we are among friends, and we are appreciated for our real values.

Sour grapes on my part? I don't think so. I was never among those who felt we needed "greater recognition," and I remain convinced that the readers we gain through such "legitimacy" will be only fair-weather friends, less interested in us for what we have to offer than simply

followers of the latest fad, as ready to desert us as they were to befriend us.

We are what we are. Science fiction is worth while and attractive to those whose minds are open and ready to be stretched yet wider with new ideas, new thoughts and feelings—those who can still feel that sense of wonder, that awe, in a universe too vast to neatly pigeon-hole and ignore. Science fiction has always—and will always—appeal to our imagination. Those whose imaginations are lost or atrophied will never find much of value here, and we stand only to lose something unique and valuable if we descend to their level in order to court them and win their approval.

#### *The issue at hand:*

THIS IS ONLY our second issue to feature all new material, and we're still readjusting. The great advantage of that "classic reprint" was, for me, the elasticity it offered in making up an issue. Following a rough guide in terms of wordage for the fiction, I could allow the features to sprawl as they chose, always confident that a reprint could be found to take up the remaining space, however much or little there might be.

When I put together the first reprint-free issue, it was the February FANTASTIC, and I under-estimated the material needed, with the result that we had to rush an extra item in at the last moment, and add a portfolio of art besides. When I approached the March AMAZING, I deliberately lengthened the features and added more fiction. The result was an overage: we had to hold back one feature and cut down another. John D. Berry's *Clubhouse*, which reappears in this issue after a long hiatus, had been slated for our last issue, while several book reviews were also held over. I hope that this time I'll come up with the proper balance, but I'm keeping my fingers crossed. In time we'll get the hang of it, I'm sure. In the

meantime, if you find a reference to something in an issue which isn't in that issue after all—or, conversely, something extra which had been mentioned as forthcoming—well, it's just your harried editor, doing his damndest to cope. The added value in new fiction and more or longer features should be worth any short-term confusion.

IF YOU'RE a devoted reader of mastheads, you'll note ours has undergone a shakeup. Arnie Katz, who read our reprints for us, is departed, and Alan Shaw has taken over his post as Associate Editor. Alan is responsible for the noticeable decrease in the number of typos and spelling errors to be found in the magazines in the last year or so. Moving into Alan's vacated Assistant Editorship is Grant Carrington—who also has a story in this issue—now reading the “slush” or unsolicited manuscripts for us. Until Grant stepped in, all too many of these stories—those by writers totally unknown to us, a group which includes any number of abysmal writers and also a few who will probably be major names in our field in ten years—simply couldn't be given the attention they deserved. Grant brings a fresh supply of enthusiasm to the task, and has already discovered for us a dismaying (to him) number of would-be competitors whose stories we've eagerly bought. (When I was Assistant Editor of *F&SF* and doing the same job for that magazine, I once estimated that one out of every six hundred stories from “the slush pile” made it into print. That will give you an idea of the volume of stories Grant will be sifting through.) And, finally, J. Edwards bumps Harry Lee as our Art Director in a move which simply reflects the already well-established upgrading of our visual package. I've known Jake a long time; you might consider him my alter-ego....

#### *And last issue:*

YOU MAY HAVE noticed that Larry Todd & Vaughn Bodé's cover for us seemed brighter than usual—that in the afternoon sunlight the logo seemed to glow. And if you're one of a growing number who have ultra-violet “black” lights handy, you may have noticed that the cover actually *fluoresces* under u-v light. The reason is our use of two so-called day-glow inks (Saturn Yellow and Rocket Red) in place of the customary yellow and red inks used to print the cover. This was in the nature of an experiment for us (and one which was decided upon too late to mention it in that issue), and we're curious about your reactions to it. Do you notice such things? If you did, does it matter to you? Would you like to see us use these special inks on a regular basis?

Our publisher wants to know what you think. Naturally, the use of these special fluorescing inks costs us more than regular inks would, but if they help to make our magazines more visible on the stands and more attractive to you, then we'll continue their use. We've given them a trial run on the March issue of this magazine and the April issue of *FANTASTIC*, but their continued use is up to you. (We may or may not be using the special inks on the cover of this issue—the decision is still pending.) Write us—let us know.

I OWE AN APOLOGY to both David Book and the readership of this magazine for two unrelated errors which crept into *The Science in Science Fiction* last issue. Greg Benford and David Book have been alternating on recent columns, and although David wrote last issue's, Greg was credited with the column on the contents page. More important, a typographical error (actually an error in the pasteup of the type) slipped past me: three lines of type were inadvertently pasted under (instead of over) a galley-head, leaving

two lines of gibberish and a blank space in their place. It occurred on page 102 (the first page of the column), midway down the second column, and here's the way the sentence should have read:

"By 2050 or so, the average man is so stupid that the greatly outnumbered mi-

nority with 'normal' intelligence have to slave away their lives looking after the rest."

The context, in case you've forgotten, is a brief précis of Cyril Kornbluth's "The Marching Morons".

—TW

(Continued from page 77)

pulled their corks and slapped them on the bottom. Azteca's hair fell below her waist, and her breasts swelled and her eyes sparkled, and handsome Jack embraced her and then turned away and left the room. I pushed aside the memory of Jack as I'd just seen him, half vegetable and falling out of his bandages. Alone, Azteca walked to the window and looked out on the Grand Canal, and the moon fell fair on her cheek. A horrible snuffling moan filled the auditorium. It rose to a cry that sounded as if flesh itself were being torn to produce it, and Jack came crawling out of his box and into the scene. Azteca stayed by her window, unaware of the monstrosity that crawled toward her and cried out her name while the odor of leprosy filled the room.

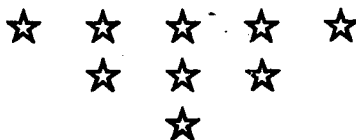
Venetia and I were the first to reach the door, probably because I was the first to realize what had happened. Most of the crowd—those miserable, dumb cast-offs from a test tube—stayed politely in their seats, wondering perhaps why they hadn't been told this was a horror holomorph. They caught

on when the holomorphic Jack, as handsome as before, returned to the scene and walked through the mess on the floor.

Do I have to add that I didn't wait around to submit my resignation? The drug had come from Doc Holliday, but the idea of giving it to Jack had been mine, all mine, and how was I to suspect that Jack could still feel, or love . . . or crawl? I helped myself to one of the small power boats at the dock, and I helped Venetia in after me. There wasn't anything to say.

The boat carried us slowly across the lagoon and back toward the Campanille, our landmark, but already I was thinking it would be wise to avoid Venetia's apartment altogether and head directly for the small inner canals. Then we could cut the engine, and drift, and wait to call out if we were lucky enough to see, down at the end of some tiny side canal, the quick movement of a squatter's boat. Venetia and I have five years, maybe ten years at the outside. I don't even think they'll come looking for us. It's simply that we don't want to be found.

—ROGER EBERT



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**(Continued from page 57)**

*had ceased to see the flashes of worlds around him, each flash different, the jumble of walls, faces, plains, forests, colors—some lasting a breath, some changing pell-mell—the faces, forms, things poking at him; the nights he had pounded through, dark or lit by strangeness, roofed or unroofed; the days of jumbled sunlight, stormclouds, indoors, outdoors, wet spray, dust, into night again, strobe after strobe, to day; he was in day now, I am getting closer at last, he thought, the feel is changing—but he had to slow down, to check; and that stone near his feet, it had stayed there some time now, he wanted to risk a look but he did not dare, he was so tired, and he was sliding, was going out of control, fighting to kill the merciless velocity that would not let him slow down; he was hurt, too, something had hit him back there, they had done something, he didn't know what back somewhere in the kaleidoscope of faces, arms, hooks, beams,*

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*centuries of creatures grabbing at him—and his oxygen was going, never mind it would last—it had to last, he was going home, home! And he had forgotten now the message he had tried to shout, hoping it could be picked up somehow, the important thing he had repeated; and the thing he had carried, it was gone now his camera was gone too, something had torn it away—but he was coming home Home! If only he could kill this momentum, could stay on the failing course could slip, scramble, slide, somehow rid this avalanche down to home, to home—and his throat said Home!—said Kate Kate! And his heart shouted, his lung almost gone now, as his legs fought fought and failed, as his feet gripped and skidded and held and slid, as he pitched failed, pushed, strove in the gale of timerush across space, across time, at the end of the longest path ever: the path of John Delgano, coming home.*

—JAMES TIPTREE, JR



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